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Communication around Port of CT to be improved

18 Jun 2020 - by Eugene Goddard



Ocean freight concerns are still waiting for confirmation from port officials about an initiative that will establish better communication between the likes of Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA) and Transnet Port Terminals (TPT) regarding delays experienced in the Port of Cape Town (see "Late Development" footnote).

This comes after it was reported yesterday that DAL Agency had decided to withdraw direct vessel calls at the port because of coronavirus-related staff shortages and resulting throughput processing problems.

This morning DAL Agency managing director David McCallum said it had emerged late yesterday afternoon that Transnet was setting up a call with customers regarding Cape Town.

It could not be confirmed where this initiative had originated – with TNPA or TPT.

It could also not be confirmed when the engagement from Transnet was going ahead and whether, as is the case at the Port of Durban, it would be a daily communication with industry.

“Be that as it may, it’s encouraging that there is now a forum that is coming into play,” McCallum said.

“It’s a positive sign for everyone and we welcome it.”

He added that DAL was not the only shipping line that had decided to omit Cape Town from its European rotation for the foreseeable future.

Mike Walwyn, Western Cape director of the South African Association of Freight Forwarders (Saaft), has since said that MSC and shipping consortium SAECS (SA-Europe Container Service) have also “dropped Cape Town”.

Yesterday MSC director Glenn Delve would not be drawn on whether or not this is actually the case.

Also, this morning *Freight News* was made aware that Maersk, who along with DAL and other lines make up SAECS, had issued the following directive (published here verbatim):

“In relation to our earlier announcement and given the current congestion in Cape Town Terminal (CPT), Maersk has endeavoured to make proactive adjustments to our Europe service to ensure we continue to provide a best in-class coverage and reliability as required by our customers in South Africa. As a result, both SAECS and WAF1 (West Africa) services will change rotations to adjust to the new operational conditions.

“The SAECS main string will stop calling Cape Town and will provide a weekly coverage for Durban and Port Elizabeth ports to Europe. In addition, the WAF1, currently dedicated to the Eastern Cape market, will become a dedicated Cape Town to Europe shuttle. Basis customer demand we will further deploy additional feeders from CPT, for onward transit to Europe.

“We believe this plan is the best solution available basis current port and market situation, however we fully understand that the dynamics of the port situation in South Africa will likely continue to change constantly. Thus, for the remainder of the citrus season, Maersk will continually (every week) re-evaluate our product to ensure it meets our customer needs. We feel our current deployment, assets and capabilities give Maersk the following operational agility to do so:

- Two ocean services calling South Africa and Europe (WAF1 and SAECS) - allows us to better isolate a particular port and better ensure schedule reliability
- Comprehensive feeder capacity along the South Africa coast – we have deployed additional geared feeder vessels which allow us more choices in terms of loading your cargo faster and also agility to call different terminals (berthing faster)
- Comprehensive feeder capacity in Europe – If cargo does arrive late in Europe due to port delays, for most destinations, we have multiple feeder options to ensure

your cargo arrives at destination with minimised delays.

The new vessel service rotations will be:

- SAECS Rotation: Durban – Port Elizabeth (PECT) – Algeciras – Rotterdam – London Gateway – Bremerhaven – Rotterdam – Algeciras – Walvis Bay – Port Elizabeth (Coega) – Durban
- WAF1 Rotation: Cape Town – Port Tangiers – Algeciras – Cape Town

The deployment changes will provide the following benefits

- Without Cape Town on the SAECS rotation but still deploying the same number of vessels, we expect that we will have enough buffer to ensure timely arrival in Europe and reduce any omissions or serious delays in European ports, while at the same time considerably improving the transit time from Durban.
- With a direct sailing from Cape Town to Algeciras, we aim to provide a dedicated and reliable service to this market with a fast transit time into the Mediterranean. Cargo to North Europe and Russia will tranship in Algeciras with minimal impact to transit time.
- Algeciras continues to be an integral part of our network and will not be omitted on either service to ensure the required connections.”

LATE DEVELOPMENT: At the time this report was posted *Freight News* was told that a meeting between Transnet and freight concerns did indeed take place at 9am this morning. Although there were no details by 3pm this afternoon, the meeting is said to have been fruitful. According to our source it has been decided to hold regular meetings about the Port of Cape Town every Tuesday and Thursday at 9am.

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