

WJZ 13

The worldwide economic slump forced cargo ships to be docked out of the Port of Baltimore without a place to go. But as **Mike Schuh** explains, one indicator of recovery is now evident at the port.

Inventories got so low on [car dealer](#) lots, they had to restock from the factories, many of which are overseas. That means more car carriers are steaming into the Port of Baltimore.

"March was the greatest month in terms of the number of [cars](#) that were either coming in or going out of the Port of Baltimore," said Richard Scher with the Maryland Port Administration.

In March, 38,000 rolled in. The previous record-breaker was 37,000.

"We believe we've turned a corner where demand is coming back and consumer confidence is coming back," said Scher.

Baltimore is in the top five in the U.S. for [auto](#) imports and exports. We are the closest East Coast port to the Midwest, and Baltimore has a much envied reputation for not damaging cars.

Hyundai and Kia announced they will send their cars to the Port of Philadelphia. To counteract that loss, BMW will send 50,000 cars to Baltimore.

When BMW comes up to speed, it will mean 200 jobs at the port.

Daily Record

Cars passed through Port of Baltimore in record numbers in March

by Liz Farmer

May 18th, 2010

A total of 38,053 cars passed through the port's public terminals in March, beating the previous record set in July 2008 by roughly 500 cars.

Auto imports and exports are on the rise in Baltimore and hit record numbers in March, the Port of Baltimore announced Monday.

And while many say full recovery is a long way off, the uptick in business could mean consumer confidence is improving.

A total of 38,053 cars passed through the port's public terminals in March, beating the previous record set in July 2008 by roughly 500 cars.

"This is not to be construed that the downturn is behind us, but it is encouraging to see these positive signs," said Richard Scher, Maryland Port Administration spokesman.

At its lowest point during the recession, the port handled fewer than 14,000 cars in January 2009. Scher added that during that time as many as 50,000 unsold cars were held at the port because demand was too low to ship them. Now fewer than 30,000 cars are at the port.

“So we’re taking baby steps forward,” Scher said.

The same trend is appearing in other parts of the country. A spokesman for the Port of San Diego did not have March numbers immediately available but said auto imports and exports have also been on the rise this year. At the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, auto business was up more than 30 percent this March compared with a year earlier.

Peter Kitzmiller, president of the Maryland Automobile Dealers Association, said the port’s traffic roughly reflects demand in the industry. Since the beginning of the year, sales in Maryland have been up, he said, increasing from 14,000 new cars sold in February to 25,000 in March.

The dealers association is predicting a 12 percent increase to about 350,000 new cars sold in 2010.

“Certainly things have gotten better,” Kitzmiller said. “But you can take that with a grain of salt — 2009 was pretty much the worst year ever.”

But the good news, he added, is that demand for major purchases like autos or homes typically correlate with consumer confidence.

“Even people who still have their jobs, they’re not very confident [in their stability] and that makes it very difficult for someone to consider making a big purchase,” he said. “So with traffic up and [new car] sales increasing since January, that’s a good sign of confidence.”

Used car dealers, however are not sharing the sentiment.

In Germantown, sales at Montrose Automotive are down 60 percent compared with the first four months of 2009. The business was one of 17 Chrysler dealerships in Maryland that was shut down last year.

Sales Manager Kevin Domingue said the dealership, now a used car lot, has reduced its inventory and cut staff in half from a year ago.

“We’re not seeing very much of anything, to be honest,” he said.

The port’s March statistics include the start of new business and business that has since left Baltimore. In late March automaker BMW agreed to a contract that calls for roughly

50,000 cars to be shipped through Baltimore during the next five years. The deal will create roughly 200 jobs, according to the port.

Last month, the Hyundai Motor Co. shifted its imports and exports to the Philadelphia Regional Port Authority in an effort to consolidate its mid-Atlantic shipping operations. The loss will result in roughly 116 layoffs in Baltimore.

Even with that loss, Scher said the Port of Baltimore's auto business is up from last year by roughly 9 percent and he expects to finish ahead of last year's total.

"Obviously last year was challenging for all ports in terms of cargo and tonnage," he said. "But through that period it was our goal to maintain market share. And for most part we've done that."

Baltimore Business Journal

Port of Baltimore handles record number of cars in March

by Scott Dance Staff

May 18, 2010

The Port of Baltimore handled a record high number of automobiles in March, officials said Monday.

The state-owned terminals processed 38,000 cars in March, topping the previous high of the last decade, 37,600 in July 2008.

The announcement came as Hyundai and Kia begin to transition their shipments to the Port of Philadelphia. The automakers had started shipping up to 50,000 vehicles each year to Baltimore in 2002, but 116 workers will lose their jobs once the move north is complete July 1.

Meanwhile, that could be counterbalanced by new business from BMW. That automaker recently moved its shipments of up to 50,000 vehicles from Charleston, S.C., to Baltimore.

Auto shipping creates about 1,150 jobs at the port, according to the Maryland Port Administration. While the loss of the Kia and Hyundai business is taking jobs, BMW's business is expected to create 200 more.

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WBAL Radio
Port Sets Record
May 17, 2010
Anne Kramer

The Port of Baltimore says it set a new record this spring for the number of vehicles that pass through its terminals.

Officials say a little more than 38-thousand vehicles passed through the terminals for March beating a previously set record in July of 2008