




THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
CENTER FOR TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH

A stylized world map with a network of white lines and dots overlaid on it, set against a light blue background. The map shows the continents of North and South America.

COVID-19 IMPACTS: Immediate Effects on Freight and What Will Last

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Short-Term Shockwaves

- COVID-19 rapidly induced demand for items such as disinfectant, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, personal protective equipment (PPE), and more
- Impact: shortage of critical supplies
- Response: limiting purchases and redirecting manufacturing capacity

More Time at Home

- Many Americans have not returned to work or school since the beginning of the pandemic
- All large gathering places have been closed
- Impact: lack of demand for bulk supplies, trapped supply being wasted
- Response: shifting manufacturing capacity and supply chains

Supply Chain Challenges

- US manufacturing has largely been outsourced
 - Must compete with local demand
- Value in adaptability
 - Companies pivoted manufacturing capacity to produce critical supplies
- Lack of centralized command
 - State/local agencies left to compete for supplies

Looking Forward

- US reliance on global supply chain means competing for scarce supplies in a pandemic
- Pandemic supply stockpiles need to be maintained to avoid severe impacts
- Centralized leadership can be used to allocate essential supplies in short supply

Thank you for listening!

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