



AlixPartners

# Transport M&A Review: Q3 2025

October 2025



# Deal activity slumps for third consecutive quarter; Investments have been focused on strategic M&A

## Deal activity slumps for third straight quarter

Q3 deal volume fell ~18% from an already weak Q2. Total invested capital also declined when excluding the \$89bn mega-merger of Union Pacific–Norfolk Southern.

## Tariff and geopolitical uncertainty continue to discourage major M&A

Aggressive U.S. trade policy and uncertain geopolitics continue to weigh on confidence – U.S. GDP is growth expected to slow down to ~1.9% YoY, a -0.8% from the 2024 forecast, further fueling the economic uncertainty.

## Cost of debt and underwriting uncertainty continued

Despite anticipated easing, the timing and scale of rate cuts remained uncertain discouraging financial buyers from major investments – investors continue to extend holding periods awaiting attractive valuations amid returns pressure.

## Strategic acquisitions prevailed amid slowed M&A activity

Majority of Q3 M&A invested capital<sup>2</sup> came from strategic buyers – market consolidation, geographic and capability-led acquisitions remained dominant plays.

## Freight fundamentals lacked durable uptrend with cautious M&A

Ocean rates continued to cool on capacity growth; Trucking remained soft amid moderate capacity increase; Air freight rose as shippers sought speed to bypass tariff uncertainty – investors remained cautious waiting for clearer earnings run-rates.

# 111

Total deal volume

▼ 17.8% vs. Q2 2025

▼ 47.1% vs. Q3 2024

# \$2.9bn<sup>1</sup>

Adj. total deal value

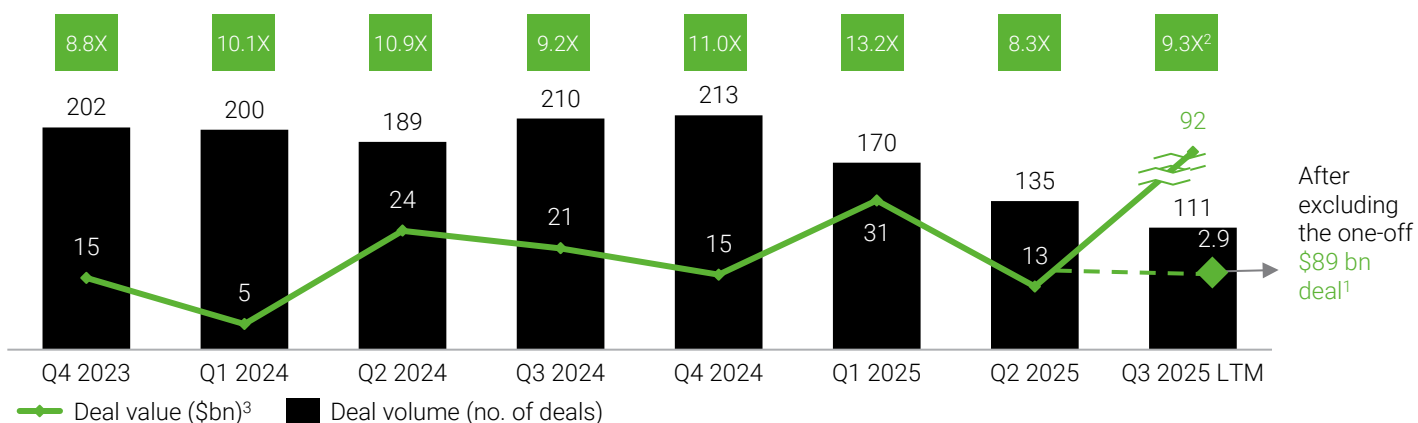
# \$92.5bn<sup>2</sup>

Total deal value

# 9.3x

Average. EV/EBITDA<sup>3</sup>

## M&A deal volume, value, and valuation multiples



1. After excluding the impact of Union Pacific–Norfolk Southern \$89bn mega-deal; 2. Values skewed due to impact of Union Pacific–Norfolk Southern \$89bn mega-deal; 3. Based on selective deals for which EV/EBITDA data was available and after excluding the outliers over 50x  
Source: Capital IQ, AlixPartners Intelligence

# Freight fundamentals lacked sustainable upward momentum leading to subdued M&A; Ports and infrastructure remains the most resilient segment

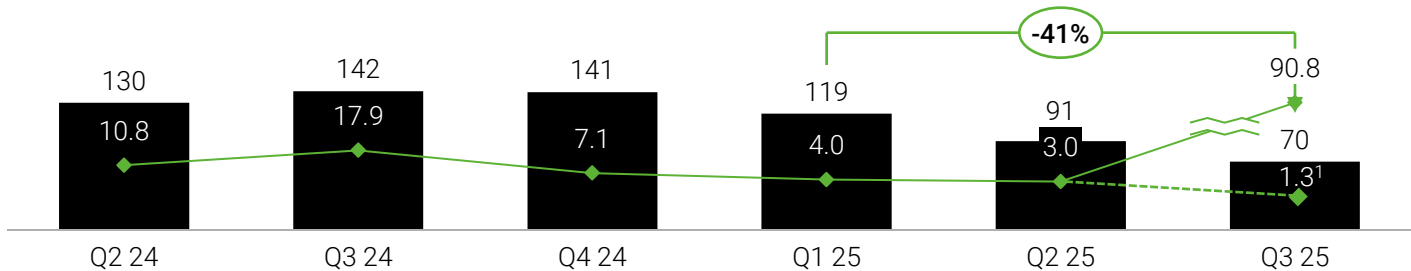
**M&A activity declined across all sub-sectors in freight transport, driven by macroeconomic factors and structural imbalances in the industry.**

Road transport capacity growth outpaced demand, pushing freight rates lower, while ocean carriers saw only marginal spot rate recovery – insufficient to offset falling carriers' profitability.

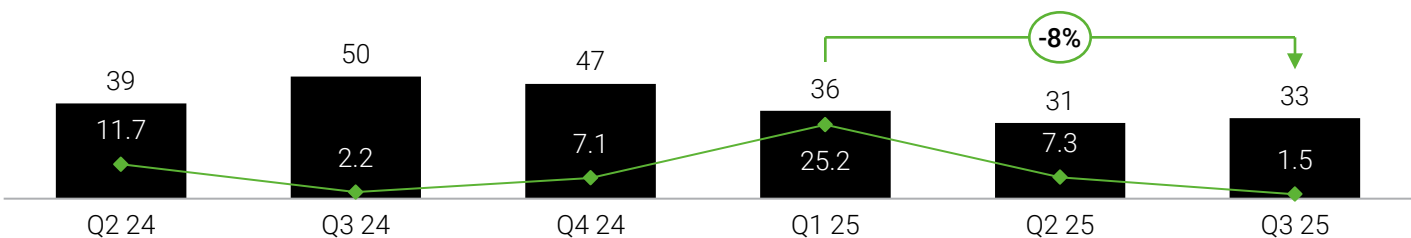
Air cargo remains relatively stable, supported by demand for speed amid tariff uncertainty and seasonal peaks.

Despite the structural softness, ports and infrastructure stand out as the most resilient segment. Strategic interest in ports, terminals and associated assets remains strong, underpinned by the need for more localised and resilient supply chains and long-term infrastructure investment.

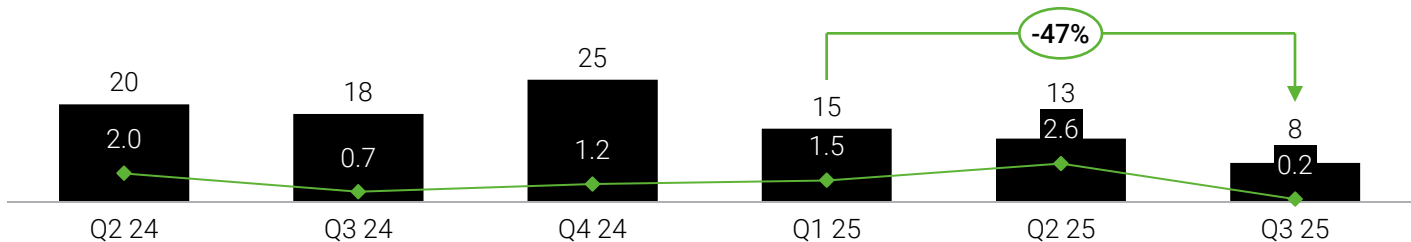
## Logistics and Transportation (63%)



## Ports and Infrastructure (30%)



## Shipping (7%)



(X%) Share of total deal volume    ◆ Deal value (\$bn)<sup>2</sup>    ■ Deal volume (no. of deals)

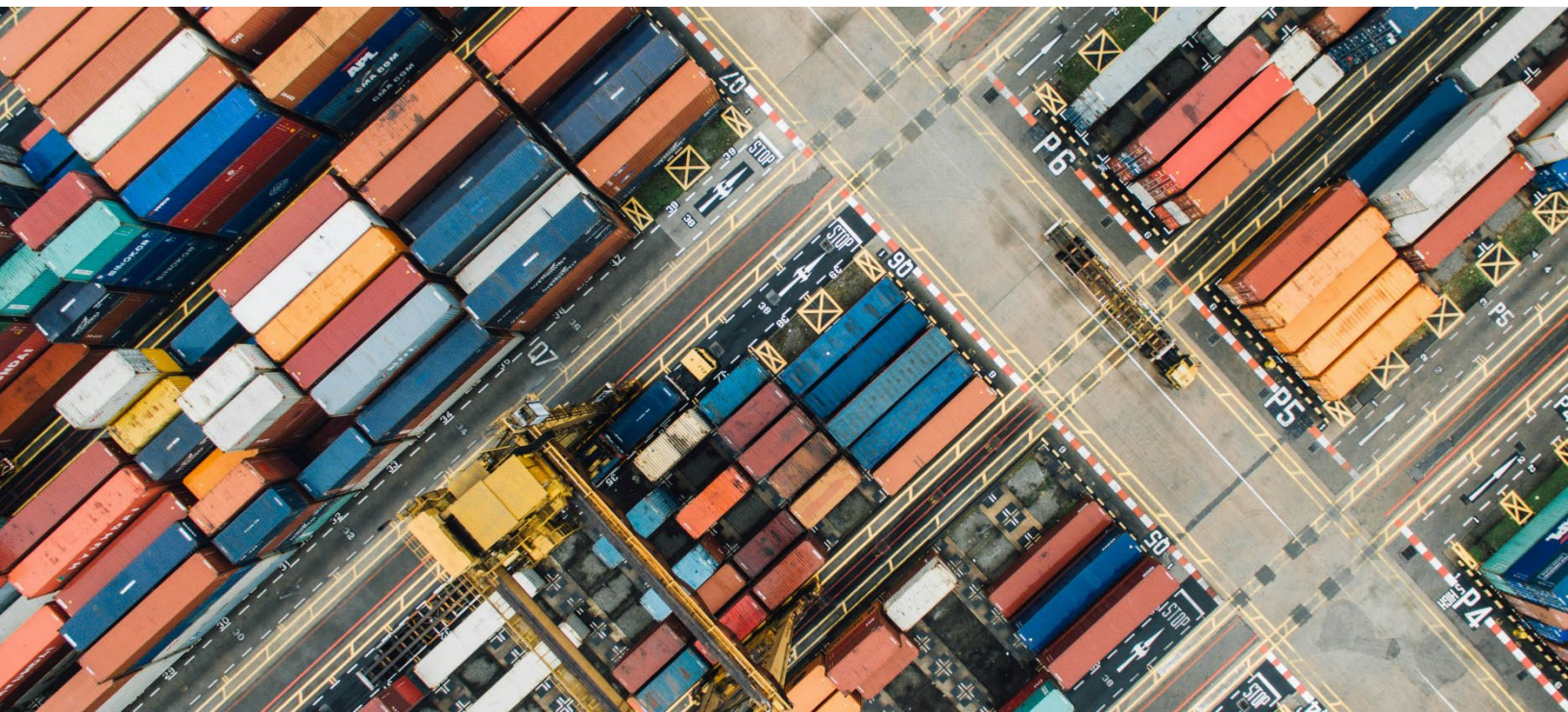
1. Excluded the outlier Norfolk Southern mega-deal with value of \$89bn; 2. Based on selective number of deals for which value data was available  
Source: Capital IQ, AlixPartners Intelligence

## Here's what matters

- Re-shoring, nearshoring and regionalisation will continue to fuel deal flow targeting regional infrastructure, vertical integration, and cross-border acquisitions.
- Consumer shifts drive specialised high-margin niches such as smart cold-chain, smart last-mile, same-day deliveries, predictive logistics, autonomous warehousing, etc.
- As ocean freight stalls with supply growth weighing on spot rates – buyers are expected to move towards inland and port-adjacent assets and services.
- Tariff uncertainty slightly lifts air freight as shippers prioritised speed over cost, which signals a potential valuation upside in air cargo and express solutions.

## Winning actions

- Drive strategic M&A anchored in a multi-year vision – filter out short-term noise and focus on long-term value.
- Bold moves win: Seize emerging capabilities and capitalise on today's lower valuations to future-proof your business.
- Rethink your M&A pipeline to anticipate the second- and third-order impacts of tariffs and shifts in global supply chains.
- Use creative deal structures such as minority stakes and earn-outs to unlock value while the market resets.



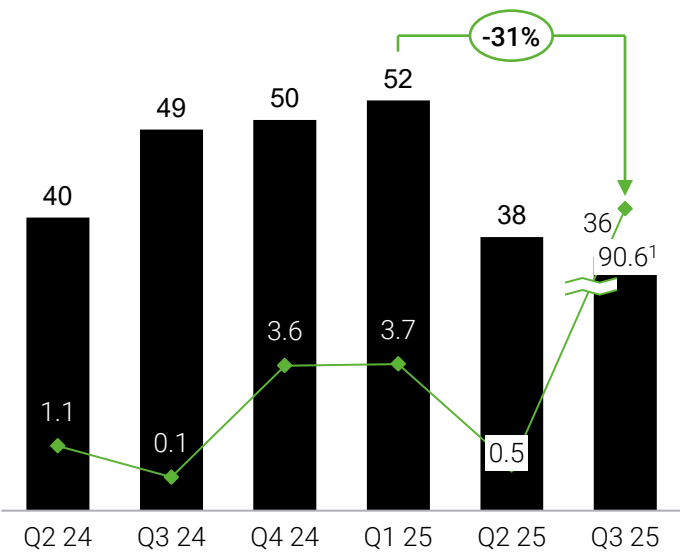
# Transport M&A momentum remains soft across all regions; North America and APAC saw fewer deals but reported more larger-ticket transactions

## Transport M&A momentum remains subdued across all regions as investors adopt a cautious approach.

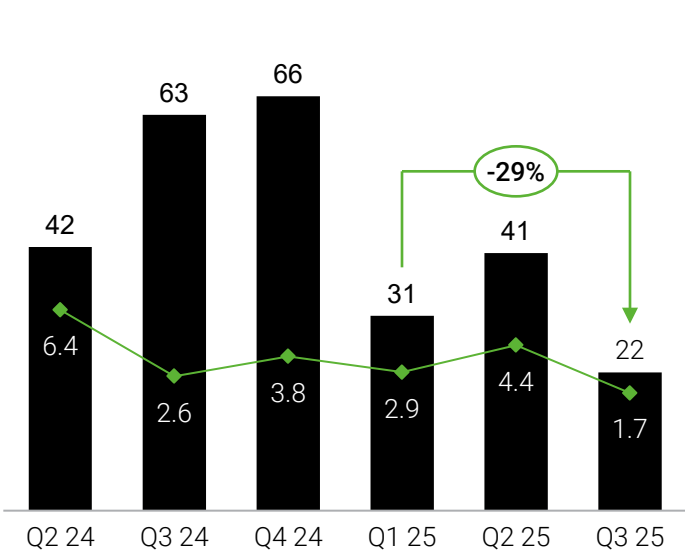
North America and APAC accounted for fewer deals than EMEA yet reported more larger-ticket transactions, signaling a shift toward strategic scale acquisitions.

Factors such as delayed rate cuts, persistent inflation, and uncertainty around global freight have contributed to the cautious approach.

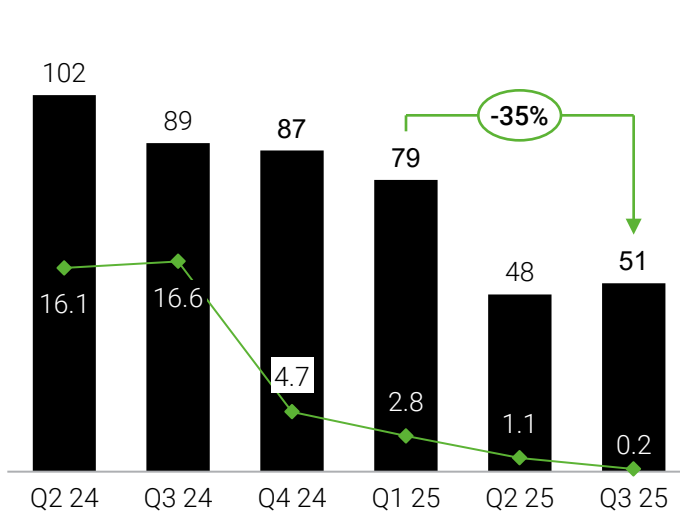
### North America (32%)



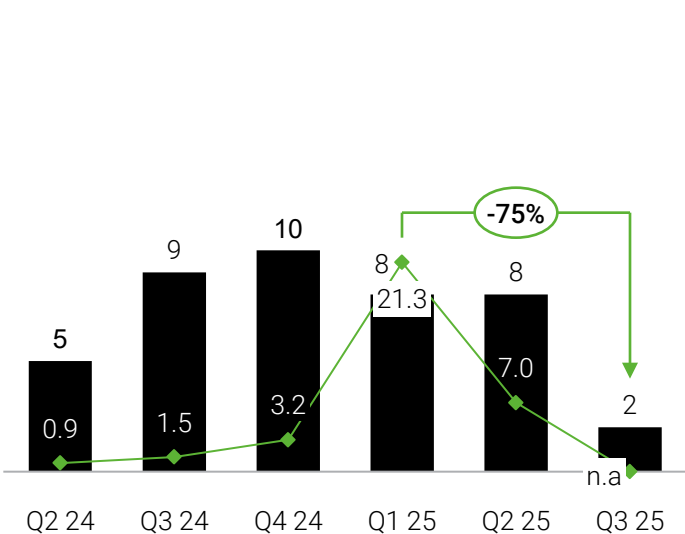
### APAC (20%)



### EMEA (46%)



### South America (2%)



(X%) Share of total deal volume    —◆— Deal value (\$bn)<sup>2</sup>    ■ Deal volume (no. of deals)



Majority of the capital<sup>1</sup> came from strategics – market consolidation, geographic expansion, localization and capability-led acquisitions remain dominant plays

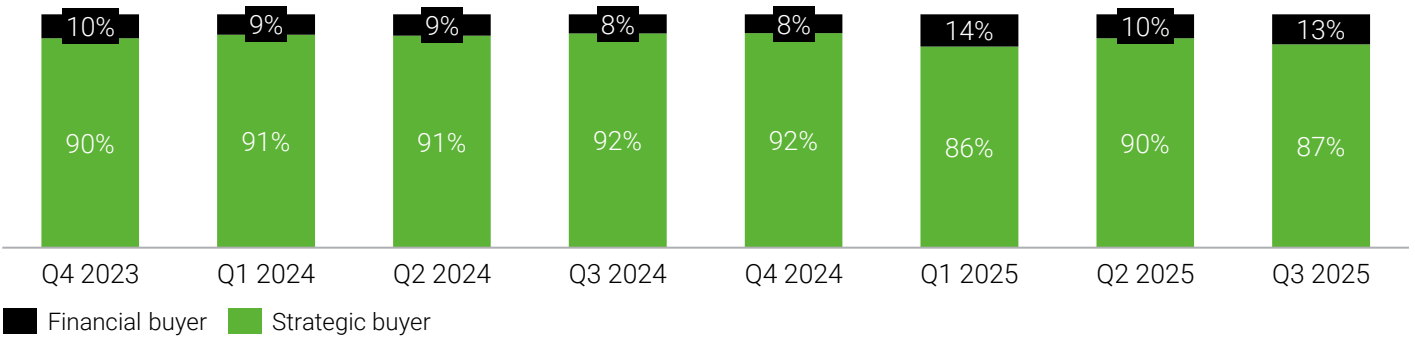
## Prominent themes underpinning M&A activity in Q3 2025

Most prominent

<b>Market consolidation &amp; control</b>	Acquire competitors or adjacent players to boost market share, enhance pricing power, and streamline operations through scale.  <b>Example:</b> Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern mega-merger focused on consolidation of railroads across the US market.
<b>Geographic expansion</b>	Enter new geographical markets to capture growth, strengthen footprint, and diversify exposure across markets.  <b>Example:</b> Gulf Warehousing Company (GWC) acquisition of a minority stake in ANCLA Logistik GmbH, marking a strategic entry into Europe.
<b>Capability-driven acquisition</b>	Acquire technology, expertise or specialised solutions to enhance competitiveness and future-proof operations.  <b>Example:</b> STO Express acquisition of Zhejiang Danniao for smart logistics capabilities and strengthening its technology backbone.
<b>Localisation</b>	Secure critical infrastructure and assets under domestic control to ensure supply chain resilience and national security.  <b>Example:</b> Dutch investors acquired Signpost stake in Rotterdam Harbour Holding to secure important logistics assets under domestic control.

Least prominent

## Deal volume by type of buyer (no. of deals)



1. Only for deals with available value data and excluding two outlier mega-deals (Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern, and Blackrock acquisition of South American ports)  
Source: Capital IQ, AlixPartners Intelligence

The road ahead: signs of steady pick-up, not a rapid spike

## 1 Uncertainty is the operating baseline

Trade policy, geopolitics, and foreign-policy shifts will continue to influence deal activity. Executives and investors are planning with uncertainty, not around it.

## 2 Mild macro tailwinds but timing remains uncertain

Recent rate cuts<sup>1</sup>, with expectations for further cuts, should support multiples and re-open leveraged deals, but the pace and magnitude remain uncertain.

Keep balance sheets agile; be ready to move when spreads and underwriting terms improve.

## 3 Freight fundamentals hint at stability with pockets of pressure

**Inland and regional logistics:** Gradual constraints from seasonal demand uptick and capacity attrition, supports pricing stability and earnings visibility.

**Ocean:** Still choppy as excess capacity keeps rates low – capital likely tilts to inland or port-adjacent services and intermodal plays.

## 4 Where growth and value is durable

**Infrastructure tied to nearshoring:** Cross-border links, terminals, rail-adjacent assets.

**High-margin niches:** Pharma, cold chain, mission-critical parts.

**Resilient verticals:** Essential goods, e-commerce fulfilment, and time-definite services.

## 5 Strategics to lead as deal approaches get creative

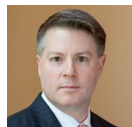
With cautious financial buyers, strategics will dominate near-term activity – consolidation, geo-expansion, capability tuck-ins to remain as dominant themes.

Expect alternative deal approaches such as minority stakes, continuation vehicles, and convertibles to bridge valuation gaps and preserve timing flexibility.

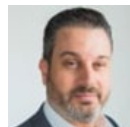
1. 25bps cut from the Fed in September 2025, 25bps cut from the ECB in June 2025, and 25bps cut from BoE in August 2025  
Source: AlixPartners Intelligence

# Your transport M&A edge with AlixPartners: We deliver strategy, execution, and results

Tell us what you think – connect with our team



**Marc Iampieri**  
Global Co-Leader of  
Logistics & Transportation  
[miampieri@alixpartners.com](mailto:miampieri@alixpartners.com)



**Brian Nemeth**  
Global Co-Leader of  
Logistics & Transportation  
[bnemeth@alixpartners.com](mailto:bnemeth@alixpartners.com)



**Sean O'Flynn**  
EMEA Co-Leader of  
M&A and Private Equity  
[soflynn@alixpartners.com](mailto:soflynn@alixpartners.com)



**Lian Hoon Lim**  
Asia Co-Leader of  
M&A and Turnarounds  
[llim@alixpartners.com](mailto:llim@alixpartners.com)



**Fabian Engels**  
Partner and Managing Director  
Logistics & Transportation  
[fengels@alixpartners.com](mailto:fengels@alixpartners.com)



**Maxim Vanhencxthoven**  
Director  
M&A and Logistics & Transportation  
[mvanhencxthoven@alixpartners.com](mailto:mvanhencxthoven@alixpartners.com)



**Niklas Jovy**  
Director  
Logistics & Transportation  
[njovy@alixpartners.com](mailto:njovy@alixpartners.com)



**Umer Farooq**  
Senior Vice President  
M&A and Logistics & Transportation  
[ufarooq@alixpartners.com](mailto:ufarooq@alixpartners.com)

	AEROSPACE AND DEFENCE	AUTOMOTIVE & INDUSTRIALS	CONSUMER & RETAIL	ENERGY	FINANCIAL SERVICES	TECH., MEDIA & TELECOM	LOGISTICS & TRANSPORTATION
Performance Improvement	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Turnaround & Restructuring	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
M&A and Transactions	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
AI & Digital	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Risk	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Transformation	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

## We support clients across the entire investment and transaction lifecycle



### Who we are



**1981**  
year founded



**3,500+**  
professionals

**26**

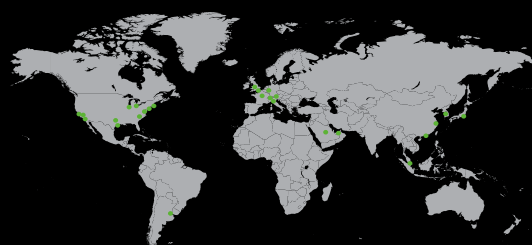
global offices  
across four  
continents

**200+**

Transport &  
infrastructure  
experts

**800+**

M&A  
experts



Boston | Buenos Aires | Chicago | Dallas | Detroit | Houston  
Los Angeles | New York | San Francisco | Silicon Valley  
Washington DC | Wilmington | Dubai | Düsseldorf | Frankfurt  
Hong Kong | London | Manchester | Milan | Munich | Paris | Riyadh  
Shanghai | Singapore | Tokyo | Zürich



## ABOUT US

For more than forty years, AlixPartners has helped businesses around the world respond quickly and decisively to their most critical challenges—circumstances as diverse as urgent performance improvement, accelerated transformation, complex restructuring and risk mitigation.

These are the moments when everything is on the line—a sudden shift in the market, an unexpected performance decline, a time-sensitive deal, a fork-in-the-road decision. But it's not what we do that makes a difference, it's how we do it.

Tackling situations when time is of the essence is part of our DNA—so we adopt an action-oriented approach at all times. We work in small, highly qualified teams with specific industry and functional expertise, and we operate at pace, moving quickly from analysis to implementation. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our clients until the job is done and only measure our success in terms of the results we deliver.

Our approach enables us to help our clients confront and overcome truly future-defining challenges. We partner with you to make the right decisions and take the right actions. And we are right by your side. When it really matters.

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of AlixPartners, LLP, its affiliates, or any of its or their respective professionals or clients. This article Transport M&A Review | October 2025 ("Article") was prepared by AlixPartners, LLP ("AlixPartners") for general information and distribution on a strictly confidential and non-reliance basis. No one in possession of this Article may rely on any portion of this Article. This Article may be based, in whole or in part, on projections or forecasts of future events. A forecast, by its nature, is speculative and includes estimates and assumptions which may prove to be wrong. Actual results may, and frequently do, differ from those projected or forecast. The information in this Article reflects conditions and our views as of this date, all of which are subject to change. We undertake no obligation to update or provide any revisions to the Article. This Article is the property of AlixPartners, and neither the Article nor any of its contents may be copied, used, or distributed to any third party without the prior written consent of AlixPartners.