

# Make Me Smart October 20, 2021 transcript

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**Molly Wood:** Alright, show time. I'm Molly Wood. Welcome to Make Me Smart, the podcast where we are never making sense right before we have to say that we are going to make sense. But we are. Thanks for joining us.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I'm Kai Ryssdal, it is what do you want to know Wednesday, the day of the week where we get to answer the questions that you send us. We shall begin right now. The first one comes to us from Grace. She's in Stanford, California who wrote in to ask, why do some ports like Savannah, Georgia work 24/7 already while the Port of Los Angeles--I'm paraphrasing her question here--while the Port of Los Angeles doesn't. And I'm leaving out her Long Beach question because the Port of Long Beach has been 24 hours for about a month, maybe a little bit more. But the port of LA, if you know the news, just last week at the urgent, urging of the president of the United States has agreed to go 24/7. So a couple of things. Number one, yes, some ports in the United States do go 24/7. Yes, some ports in Asia go 24/7, like 365. So that is not an unheard of thing. But the Port of Los Angeles and Long Beach, they're a joint port, they, they're almost on top of each other, separated by Navy Boulevard down there. Long Beach has been 24 hours for a little bit, Los Angeles has not. And here's the thing, those two ports together are plus or minus 40% of the container cargo traffic that comes into the United States of America, which is to say a non small chunk of this economy flows through those two ports. The theory had been, and the Biden ministration is banking on the fact that if you can get some retailers like Home Depot and Target and Walmart, to devote some of their resources to clearing out the backlog at the port, what happens when those 65 ships finally get the anchor that have been waiting out there for an average of 13 days to unload, the before times average, by the way, was zero days, they would come in and unload and go away. But now they're sitting out there, 60 of them, which is 10s of 1000s of containers. Anyway, I'm getting up ahead of steam here. The problem is that going 24/7 is not the only thing that's going to fix it because you can run the port till the cows come home. But one truck can only carry one container, right? So imagine you could get all those boats in as soon as possible. And they each have, I kid you not, 10,000 of those containers on them. And there's 60 boats, right? One truck, one container, that takes forever, that's only one of the backlogs, right, we don't have enough truck drivers, we don't necessarily have enough longshoremen, we don't have enough port infrastructure to unload all the backlog that we get. I was just down at a container depot in Wilmington, which is right next to the ports in California. And, and there are just hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of trucks. But each of them can only carry one thing. So that's why 24/7 is not the panacea that I think the Biden administration thinks it's going to be, which is more than your last name so, yeah.

**Molly Wood:** Also evidently, I had actually not really seen or noticed this until somebody I think tweeted us, but it was basically like, here it is, this story that's, that from Monday saying that it's not just because of the supply chain crisis or the, you know, slow ports or what it like that there's a backup because Americans keep buying so much crap.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. And the bigger the backlog gets, the bigger the backlog gets, if that makes any sense, right? The more stuff you try to shove in the funnel, the more backed up the funnel gets, right?

**Molly Wood:** So maybe like, everybody actually needs to say stop by a state stop like don't you know if it's, if the theory is Oh, we'll order stuff now for the holidays. Like maybe just don't, like maybe shop locally or knit a sweater? Because it's not helping.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Right? Right? But that's what everybody in a macro economic sense is banking on right. Powell and the Fed are banking on that backlog to go away so that the supply side inflationary pressures will abate, consumer groups are saying, well, Americans want what they want when we got it, but maybe we need to really adjust our expectations. Retailers are like, Oh, my God, you're killing me. I want to sell your stuff, but I can't sell your stuff. So please relax. It's really a challenge. I mean, it's an honest to god challenge.

**Molly Wood:** Anyway, I have been fascinated by everything that you've said, and would listened to it every day. And luckily, Kai is doing a whole series about ports in our supply chain called temporarily unavailable on the evening broadcasts of Marketplace, because it is actually so interesting and so complicated, and there's no obvious solution in sight.

**Kai Ryssdal:** It's gonna take months and months and months and months and months. This is not, you know, if you're thinking that once the Christmas glut gets done, it'll be taken care of, that is not true.

**Molly Wood:** Yep. Learn to knit, friends. Learn to knit. That's right. That's right. Our next question comes actually from a listener via Twitter, demon Bob bad man.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Oh, my goodness.

**Molly Wood:** I love it when we got questions from Twitter, right on. Demon Bob says, and this is a great question, actually. Is the great resignation a uniquely American thing? Or is this a global thing? The grace resignation, of course, this idea that started floating around about April, when a record number of US workers quit their jobs. And that seems to continue to be happening. We've also seen strikes across industries, some are apparently calling it striketober. And I think it was like 100,000 workers, I know, we just can't, I mean, the thing that's uniquely American is giving everything like a name and like a CNN graphic. So if the simple question is like, are people quitting their jobs in other countries, probably, but it's probably not as obvious in Europe, maybe, because they have a stronger social net, social safety net. In Germany, there are definitely problems where companies can't find skilled workers, possibly because the pay is not

high enough, which could push wages up. China is seeing something similar, in other countries, though, you know, when people are coming back to work, like in Latin America and the Caribbean, they're making even less than they made before. And so the, it's, there are disruptions, it sounds like, all over the world. But America is unique in our ability to give everything a name and a graphic.

**Kai Ryssdal:** What could be more American?

**Molly Wood:** The great this and that. The most thing about Bob, although I guess, you know, yes, there's a lot of disruption, it does seem like it's hard to gauge how big a deal it is in America versus in other countries. But that doesn't mean it's not a big deal. And I think it's gonna have repercussions for a long time. We have had a hard time. I think, honestly quantifying how much like more power workers have, there's this sense that workers have all this extra bargaining power and they can get paid more, and they can, you know, push the employees and the employers in the direction of more flexibility and remote work access and paid leave. I'm not sure yet. We haven't really been able to quantify how much that's really happening.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I think that's true, and we have to wait for the results of some of the stoppages or near stoppages, like IATSE, but there's the Kellogg strike, there's the Deere strike, right? We have to wait for those collective actions to work their way out. I think what we can say, though, just based on the thing we've talked about on, on the show a couple of times, the number of people in the United States quitting their jobs last month, as we talked about, 3% of the American workforce just said, we're out of here. Right? I think individual workers are feeling empowered, or desirous enough of making change that they're willing to take a risk. I don't know how that plays out on the, on the, you know, collective scale.

**Molly Wood:** Right, that 3% of the American workforce doing anything all at the same time is a lot. No doubt about that.

**Kai Ryssdal:** All right. Oh, my goodness, zoom fatigue in this pandemic. Here you go.

**Stephanie:** Hi, Kai, and Molly, this is Stephanie from Northern Indiana. I'm wondering if anyone has studied the carbon footprint of the average length of zoom call. Thanks for making us all smarter. You two are the best.

**Molly Wood:** Well, no, you are.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Oh, man. Okay. So yes, there is academic research on this one from Purdue, MIT, and Yale, it was published this past spring, looking at the ways our increasing users of the internet, accelerated by the pandemic, of course, because we're all online all the time and so much more has increased environmental footprint. So here's what it says. They found that one hour of streaming or video conferencing can emit between 150 and 1,000 grams of carbon dioxide depending on the service. So let's translate that into nonmetric. 1,000 grams is a kilogram that is 2.2046 pounds of carbon dioxide, depending on the service. So one of their

conclusions was that you could turn off the camera during video calls, reduce some greenhouse gas emissions by a not small number, 96%. But how much it's actually affecting the climate to begin with is kind of small. So, you know.<sup>8</sup>

**Molly Wood:** Probably, especially like you commuting to work, I would imagine, you know, yeah, apparently you totally, like by comparison, a car produces about 8,877 grams. So if what you said, 1000 grams is 2.2 pounds? So then 8,000 is about 16 pounds. Yeah, thank you. From burning one gallon of gasoline. And then of course, you need two to 12 liters of water in the land area about the size of an iPad Mini apparently. So it's better than driving to work, I guess is what we're saying. It's better than a poke in the eye.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah, we should. We should also point out that, you know, climate scientists and others who measure carbon dioxide in the atmosphere talk in tons, literally tons of carbon dioxide. So, you know,

**Molly Wood:** It's probably not, I mean, I wish I could, I wish I could tell you that you shouldn't be zooming, but probably like, going vegetarian is way better.

**Kai Ryssdal:** eah, right. Exactly. Yeah, that's, that's exactly right. That's exactly right.

**Molly Wood:** As much as I have hated the zoom, I did, I was on a phone call the other day with two people, right. So it was a three person phone call, which in before times seemed totally normal. And maybe it's because they were in different locations. But it was almost impossible to navigate, because someone would try to talk. And then the other one would try to talk at the same time and it was like, can you hear me now? No, you go ahead. No, you go ahead. And then they were all jumping on each other. And then I realized, like, Oh my God, when you have more than two people, the benefit of the zoom is you can actually tell who wants to talk, son of a biscuit. They got me. Yep. And then finally, we have this urgent question from listener Bill related to the supply chain. Is there a shipping date for the banana pants, asks Bill, hoping to get them before Thanksgiving. Of course, he is referring to the banana pants that we dangled in front of you as enticement during our most recent fundraising drive, and you responded and like over 1000 of you ordered banana pants. And they haven't shipped yet. In fact, I did too. I donated to get a pair for my kid. That you know, I mean, okay, I'm sure he wants to know if he can wear him at Thanksgiving because they're super roomy. Yeah, so we got an update straight from the banana pants HQ. Emily, Emily Kittleson, manager of national fundraising at APM sent us this update.

**Emily:** Do not fear, your banana pants are on the way. You may have heard about a little global supply chain problem. So yeah, when we saw the estimated delivery date for shipping them, which was mid-December, we decided to put those beauties on a plane and get them here as soon as we could. So right now, there are 33 boxes of banana pants waiting to make it through customs and then be received at our warehouse. And our best guess is that you will get them by around the second week of November. So you'll get an email with a tracking number when they're on the way. And if you're super worried, you can always email us,

giving@marketplace.org. Most of all, thank you, thank you, thank you for your patience and for supporting Make Me Smart.

**Molly Wood:** Oh, there we go. Look at that. You ask. We answer. Emily Kittelson head of fundraising at American Public Media, Manager of national fundraising. That is fantastic. That's not so bad. That's the benefit of small batches, that we can just divert from the ports to the planes. That's right.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Man oh man, there you go. Banana pants. All right, we're done. Back tomorrow hollowed out shell Thursday's we'll be calling, we'll see how the mood is when we get there. Send us your questions or make me smiles, also your answer to the make me smart question. We could use some of those too, send them all to makemesmart@marketplace.org, or leave us a voicemail 508-827-6278 or 508-UB-SMART

**Molly Wood:** Make Me Smart is produced by Marissa Cabrera with help from Marque Greene, super extra thanks to them on Wednesdays where they do all this extra work for us. Today's program was engineered by Lianna Squillace. Our intern is Grace Rubin.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Ben Tolliday and Daniel Ramirez composed our theme music. Our senior producer is Bridget Bodner, about whom I'm now checking the slack to see if we forgot anything. Just. just looking. Always got a check. Never no never

**Molly Wood:** Doo doo doo doo doo doo.