

American Electric(AEP)

\$78.15 (As of 01/13/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$83.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 01/15/20)

Prior Recommendation: Outperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:C

Value: B

Growth: D

Momentum: D

Summary

American Electric has a stable earnings base of approximately 5.5 million customers spread over 11 states, which provides stability to its revenue stream. American Electric owns the nation's largest electricity transmission system and over 224,000-miles of distribution lines. Its strategy also includes incremental investment in renewable generation projects throughout the United States. As of Sep 30, it had 1,520 MWs of contracted renewable generation projects in service. However, impacts of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic are expected to weigh on its financial results in the near future. Its sales volumes are anticipated to deteriorate in 2020. Further, the company's unfavorable financial ratios indicate that it might face difficulties to meet debt obligations. In the past one year, its shares have underperformed the industry.

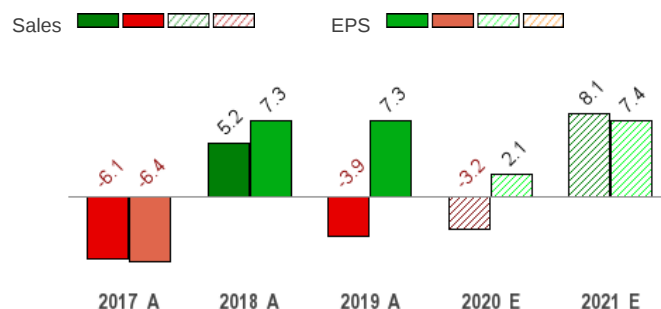
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$104.97 - \$65.14
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	2,997,898
Market Cap	\$38.8 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	-6.2%
Beta	0.22
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$2.96 / 3.8%
Industry	Utility - Electric Power
Zacks Industry Rank	Bottom 32% (172 out of 253)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	0.7%
Last Sales Surprise	-8.3%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	-0.1%
Expected Report Date	02/18/2021
Earnings ESP	1.9%
P/E TTM	18.7
P/E F1	16.8
PEG F1	3.0
P/S TTM	2.6

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021					16,274 E
2020	3,748 A	3,494 A	4,100 A	3,864 E	15,057 E
2019	4,057 A	3,600 A	4,300 A	3,616 A	15,561 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	\$1.11 E	\$1.13 E	\$1.11 E	\$0.81 E	\$4.65 E
2020	\$1.02 A	\$1.08 A	\$1.47 A	\$0.75 E	\$4.33 E
2019	\$1.19 A	\$1.00 A	\$1.46 A	\$0.60 A	\$4.24 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

The data in the charts and tables, except sales and EPS estimates, is as of 01/13/2021. The reports text and the analyst-provided sales and EPS estimates are as of 01/14/2021.

Overview

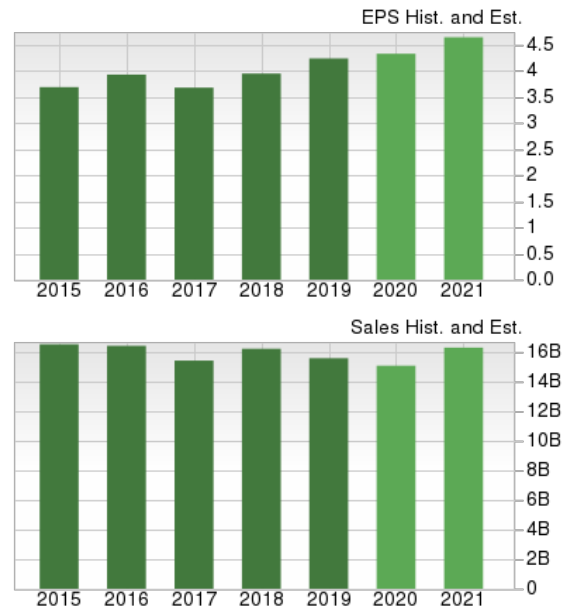
Columbus, OH-based **American Electric Power Company, Inc.** is a public utility holding company, which, through directly and indirectly owned subsidiaries, generates, transmits and distributes electricity, natural gas and other commodities. The company was incorporated in 1906. It is one of the largest integrated utilities in the United States, serving more than 5.4 million customers in 11 states. It has roughly 25,400 MW of generating capacity, of which almost 52% are coal-fired as of Sep 30 and nearly 40,000 miles of electricity transmission system network. Its service area covers Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. Approximately 70% of the company's power is generated from coal and lignite, 17% from nuclear energy, 12% from natural gas and oil, and the remaining 1% from wind, water, pumped storage and other sources. The company mainly operates under the following business segments:

Vertically Integrated Utility Operations: Revenues during 2019 came in at \$9,367.1 million, contributing 60.2% to the company's total revenues.

Transmission & Distribution Utilities: Revenues during 2019 came in at \$4,482.5 million, contributing 28.8% to the company's total revenues. AEP Transmission Holdco: Revenues during 2019 came in at \$1,073.2 million, contributing 6.9% to the company's total revenues.

Generation and Marketing: Revenues during 2019 came in at \$1,857.6 million, contributing 11.9% to the company's total revenues.

Total revenues included corporate and other revenues of \$95.8 million. Expenditures totaled \$1,314.8 million. Its public utility subsidiaries are Appalachian Power Company (APCo), Indiana Michigan Power Company (I&M), Kentucky Power Company (KPCo), Kingsport Power Company (KGPCo), Ohio Power Company (OPCo), Public Service Company of Oklahoma (PSO), Southwestern Electric Power Company (SWEPCo), AEP Texas Central Company (TCC), AEP Texas North Company (TNC), Wheeling Power Company (WPCo), AEP Generating Company (AEGCo) and AEP Transmission Holding.



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ American Electric has a stable earnings base of approximately 5.5 million customers spread over 11 states. This provides stability to the company's revenue stream and insulates it from lower sales in any particular service area. Also, the company owns the nation's largest electricity transmission system and over 224,000-miles of distribution lines. With focus on augmenting its earnings base, American Electric has directed its capital expenditure toward regulated businesses. Notably, to drive earnings, the company currently plans to invest \$5.9 billion in 2020 and \$34.9 billion over the 2020-2024 period in its core regulated operations, contracted renewables and wires. Such hefty investment should enable American Electric to achieve its long-term earnings growth of 5-7%.
- ▲ The company's geographically-diversified operations allow it to avail transmission opportunities with better returns, compared with its single-state utility peers. In this context, American Electric aims to invest approximately \$1.86 billion in its transmission and distribution business during 2020, to enhance customer reliability. Such investments should enable the company to make infrastructural upgrades in its transmission and distribution of utility services, thereby weathering adverse climate and offering better facilities. Such impressive investment approach adopted by American Electric may encourage investors to keep this stock in their portfolio.
- ▲ American Electric's investment strategy also includes incremental investments in renewable generation projects across United States. This has resulted in the expansion of the company's renewable generation portfolio. As of Sep 30, 2020, the company had approximately 1,520 MWs of contracted renewable generation projects in service. In addition, its subsidiaries had approximately 140 MWs of renewable generation projects under construction with total estimated capital costs of \$243 million related to these projects.

Ongoing investments in transmission projects and expanding renewable portfolio bode well for its future earnings

In the second quarter of 2020, management had revised the capital expenditure forecast for 2020 to 2024 to include approximately \$2 billion of capital expenditures for North Central Wind Energy Facilities. Notably, on completion of this project, American Electric will purchase a total of 1,485 megawatts of wind projects, which in turn will help its customers to save about \$3 billion, net of costs, over 30 years. In April 2020, Virginia enacted clean energy legislation, which requires the retirement of all fossil-fueled generation by 2045 and 100% renewable energy to be provided to Virginia customers by 2050. American Electric is taking steps to comply with these requirements, including increasing wind and solar installations, purchasing renewable power and broadening its portfolio of energy efficiency programs. These initiatives will expand the company's footprint in the global clean energy space.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ During the third quarter, the company experienced a reduction of 2.6% year over year in retail sales volume, whereas its industrial sales declined 7.8%. While the U.S. economy is recovering, the pace of recovery is still quite slow. Consequently, American Electric now expects its 2020 normalized retail sales to reflect 2.7% decline year over year and industrial sales volume to decrease 6.5%. While this outlook has improved, it is still below the pre-recession forecast, which the company originally guided. This is because the global economy is still in a vulnerable position as a result of the pandemic and there is uncertainty regarding the duration and total impact of COVID-19, at large.

Moreover, the company's load forecast is highly dependent on many factors including, the speed and strength of economic recovery and the extent and duration of the next wave of COVID-19 infection. If the severity of the economic disruption increases, the company's future results of operations as well as cash flows could be further adversely impacted.

- ▼ Further, the company fears that the effects of an extended disruption to the supply chains arising from COVID-19 might disrupt or delay construction, testing, supervisory and support activities at American Electric's renewable generation facilities. In particular, the North Central Wind Energy Facilities and the AEP Generation & Marketing segment's Flat Ridge 3 wind project may suffer delays due to prolonged effects of the ongoing pandemic. Further, the company has temporarily suspended all service disconnects for non-payment to help its customers. However, such non-payments may drag down the company's revenues as well as earnings. This may hinder investor's confidence in the stock. In fact, the company's shares have lost 19.1% in the past one year, thereby underperforming its industry's decline of 10.1%.
- ▼ American Electric Power has a long-term debt of \$28,156 million as of Sep 30, 2020, higher than \$26,638 million as of Jun 30, 2020. Its cash equivalents worth \$673 million as of Sep 30, 2020 remained much lower than the long-term debt level and witnessed a drop sequentially from 697 million. Moreover, the cash reserve remained much lower compared with its current debt level of \$4,309 million as of Sep 30, 2020. So, both its current and long-term debt remained significantly higher than the cash reserve, which looks discouraging from the viewpoint of the company's solvency position.

Moreover, the company's current ratio as of Sep 30, 2020, was 0.48, which being less than 1 indicates that this utility does not possess sufficient capital on hand to meet its short-term obligations. Such an unfavorable financial ratio, coupled with the company's poor cash reserve balance thus indicates that the company might face difficulties in meeting debt obligations in the near future.

Impact of the coronavirus pandemic and unfavorable financial ratios impose threat to this stock's growth

Last Earnings Report

American Electric Q3 Earnings Beat, Revenues Fall Y/Y

American Electric Power reported third-quarter 2020 adjusted earnings per share of \$1.47, which beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$1.46 by 0.7%. The bottom line also improved 0.7% from the year-ago quarter's reported figure.

The company reported GAAP earnings of \$1.51 per share compared with the year-ago quarter's earnings of \$1.49.

Quarter Ending 09/2020

Report Date	Oct 22, 2020
Sales Surprise	-8.28%
EPS Surprise	0.68%
Quarterly EPS	1.47
Annual EPS (TTM)	4.17

Total Revenues

American Electric's third-quarter revenues of \$4.1 billion missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$4.5 billion by 8.3%. The reported figure also declined 4.7% from the year-ago quarter's \$4.3 billion.

Quarterly Highlights

Total adjusted expenses in the quarter were \$1,875 million compared with \$1,941.7 million a year ago.

Adjusted operating income was \$728.2 million, up 0.8% from \$722.3 million in the year-ago quarter.

Segmental Performance

Vertically Integrated Utility Operations: Operating earnings in the quarter decreased to \$422.5 million from \$437.9 million in the year-ago quarter.

Transmission & Distribution Utilities: Operating earnings were \$152.6 million, up from \$133.9 million in the year-ago quarter.

AEP Transmission Holdco: This segment generated operating earnings of \$139.6 million, up from \$126.1 million in the second quarter of 2019.

Generation and Marketing: Operating earnings were \$63.2 million, down from \$78.3 million in the year-ago quarter.

Corporate & Other: Operating losses were \$49.7 million compared with operating loss of \$53.9 million in the year-ago quarter.

Financial Update

As of Sep 30, 2020, American Electric had cash and cash equivalents of \$409.7 million compared with \$246.8 million as of Dec 31, 2019.

Long-term debt was \$28.16 billion as of Sep 30, 2020, compared with \$25.13 billion as of Dec 31, 2019.

Cash flow from operations was \$2,922.2 million at the end of third-quarter 2020 compared with \$3,349.9 million at the end of second-quarter 2019.

2020 Guidance

American Electric reaffirmed 2020 operating earnings guidance in the range of \$4.25-\$4.45 per share. The Zacks Consensus Estimate for 2020 earnings, pegged at \$4.32, lies below the mid-point of the guidance.

Recent News

On **Nov 6, 2020**, American Electric announced that it will continue its progress toward a clean energy future by investing in its regulated businesses and renewable generation. The company plans to invest \$37 billion in capital from 2021 through 2025, with the bulk allocated to regulated businesses and renewables. The company's capital plan includes \$26.7 billion in transmission and distribution operations investments to continue updating infrastructure and implementing new technologies to benefit customers. During the same period, American Electric plans to invest \$2.8 billion in regulated renewable generation and \$2.1 billion in competitive, contracted renewable projects.

On **Nov 5, 2020**, American Electric Power announced that its compliance plans for two recently revised environmental regulations will remove 1,633 megawatts (MW) of coal-fueled generation from its fleet by the end of 2028.

The company will file compliance plans this month for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Coal Combustion Residuals (CCR) rule. Those plans will indicate that the company will retire the Pirkey Plant (580 MW) in Hallsville, Texas, in 2023 and cease using coal at the Welsh Plant (1,053 MW), in Pittsburg, Texas, in 2028.

On **Nov 4, 2020**, American Electric announced that its subsidiary EP Energy Partners (AEPEP) is seeking proposals for off-take from new solar and new wind facilities located in Ohio and ERCOT.

For the Ohio sited projects, the company is seeking renewable energy purchase agreements of 10, 12 or 15 years for solar or wind facilities that begin operation between 2021 and 2023. For the ERCOT sited projects, the company is seeking renewable energy purchase agreements of 12 years or less for solar facilities that begin operation between 2021 and 2023. Proposals with alternative terms will be accepted.

On **Oct 29, 2020**, American Electric announced that its subsidiary AEP Energy Partners has signed a long-term power purchase agreement with Atlanta Farms Solar Project, currently being developed by Savion, a renewable energy developer, for the project's planned 200 MW output in Pickaway Co. Ohio.

Construction of Atlanta Farms is scheduled to begin mid-to-late 2021, pending the approval of its permit with the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB). The project is anticipated to include approximately 600,000 solar panels capable of producing 200 MW of renewable energy and is expected to be operational by the end of 2022.

On **Oct 26, 2020**, American Electric revealed that its subsidiary AEP Energy Partners has signed a letter of intent with BQ Energy Development, LLC to purchase 100% oftake of the Columbus Solar Park being developed southwest of downtown Columbus, Ohio.

The solar energy facility, with a generation capacity of 50 MW, is scheduled to be operational by December 2022, and once completed, will have the capacity to power 5,000 homes. AEP Energy Partners will use the offtake from the project to meet its customers' needs for renewable energy, in addition to supporting potential future renewable energy needs for Columbus if the City's aggregation initiative is passed.

Valuation

American Electric Power's shares are down 7.7% in the past six months period but went down 19.1% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Utilities sector are up 7.7% and 9.7% in the past six months period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry is down 10.1%, whereas the sector is down 8.3%.

The S&P 500 index is up 18.6% in the past six months period and 17.4% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 16.8X of forward 12-month earnings, which compares to 14.8X for the Zacks sub-industry, 13.3X for the Zacks sector and 23.1X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 23.6X and as low as 15.45X, with a 5-year median of 18.25X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in line with the market. Our \$83 price target reflects 17.8X forward 12-month earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for AEP

Valuation Multiples - AEP					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	16.78	14.83	13.3	23.11
	5-Year High	23.6	15.39	15.39	23.79
	5-Year Low	15.45	11.83	11.39	15.3
	5-Year Median	18.25	13.51	13.89	17.83
P/S F12M	Current	2.37	2.24	2.82	4.52
	5-Year High	3.06	2.56	3.2	4.52
	5-Year Low	1.64	1.76	1.79	3.2
	5-Year Median	2.29	2.09	2.16	3.68
EV/EBITDA F12M	Current	10.68	9.87	9.49	17.2
	5-Year High	13.05	11.23	14.82	18.81
	5-Year Low	8.7	8.56	7.19	12.96
	5-Year Median	10.68	10.02	8.85	15.7

As of 01/13/2020

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Bottom 32% (172 out of 253)



Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Dominion Energy Inc. (D)	Neutral	3
DTE Energy Company (DTE)	Neutral	3
Duke Energy Corporation (DUK)	Neutral	3
Consolidated Edison Inc (ED)	Neutral	3
Public Service Enterprise Group Incorporated (PEG)	Neutral	3
Southern Company The (SO)	Neutral	2
Sempra Energy (SRE)	Neutral	3
Xcel Energy Inc. (XEL)	Neutral	3

The positions listed should not be deemed a recommendation to buy, hold or sell.

Industry Comparison Industry: Utility - Electric Power				Industry Peers		
	AEP	X Industry	S&P 500	DUK	PEG	XEL
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	3	3	3
VGM Score	C	-	-	C	D	D
Market Cap	38.79 B	10.11 B	26.90 B	67.38 B	29.68 B	34.16 B
# of Analysts	6	3	13	6	5	5
Dividend Yield	3.79%	3.12%	1.41%	4.22%	3.34%	2.65%
Value Score	B	-	-	B	C	C
Cash/Price	0.02	0.05	0.06	0.00	0.03	0.03
EV/EBITDA	11.74	10.62	15.05	10.90	10.74	12.74
PEG F1	2.98	3.58	2.62	4.88	6.10	3.58
P/B	1.88	1.59	3.76	1.49	1.87	2.48
P/CF	7.99	7.99	14.67	7.48	9.27	10.41
P/E F1	16.84	17.46	20.85	17.57	17.50	21.86
P/S TTM	2.59	1.93	3.00	2.79	3.07	3.00
Earnings Yield	5.94%	5.71%	4.69%	5.69%	5.71%	4.57%
Debt/Equity	1.36	1.06	0.70	1.24	0.93	1.45
Cash Flow (\$/share)	9.78	4.45	6.93	12.24	6.33	6.25
Growth Score	D	-	-	C	D	C
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	4.00%	4.80%	9.72%	2.31%	4.22%	5.75%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	7.27%	6.52%	12.36%	2.46%	-2.10%	6.44%
Current Cash Flow Growth	11.26%	7.02%	5.22%	11.06%	5.82%	7.69%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	5.40%	5.92%	8.37%	5.82%	2.02%	8.62%
Current Ratio	0.48	0.90	1.38	0.52	0.76	0.87
Debt/Capital	57.71%	51.50%	41.97%	54.24%	48.30%	59.16%
Net Margin	12.82%	9.00%	10.44%	8.68%	19.74%	12.98%
Return on Equity	10.19%	10.03%	15.37%	8.28%	11.30%	11.00%
Sales/Assets	0.19	0.22	0.50	0.15	0.20	0.22
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	8.08%	4.33%	6.00%	5.05%	3.98%	7.21%
Momentum Score	D	-	-	C	F	F
Daily Price Change	0.40%	0.86%	0.57%	2.96%	2.32%	2.54%
1-Week Price Change	-4.91%	-0.32%	2.23%	-1.65%	-1.70%	-1.36%
4-Week Price Change	-5.65%	0.54%	3.70%	1.05%	2.68%	-0.88%
12-Week Price Change	-13.55%	6.58%	14.39%	-1.03%	-1.41%	-9.12%
52-Week Price Change	-19.10%	-10.21%	7.96%	-1.01%	-0.69%	0.84%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	2,997,898	344,809	1,754,762	2,564,785	2,138,417	2,111,100
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	-0.14%	0.00%	0.06%	0.06%	-0.24%	-0.07%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	0.11%	0.11%	2.55%	-0.41%	-0.12%	0.00%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	-1.91%	0.00%	0.00%	1.06%	0.00%	-2.46%

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Zacks Stock Rating System

We offer two rating systems that take into account investors' holding horizons: Zacks Rank and Zacks Recommendation. Each provides valuable insights into the future profitability of the stock and can be used separately or in combination with each other depending on your investment style.

Zacks Recommendation

The Zacks Recommendation aims to predict performance over the next 6 to 12 months. The foundation for the quantitatively determined Zacks Recommendation is trends in the company's estimate revisions and earnings outlook. The Zacks Recommendation is broken down into 3 Levels; Outperform, Neutral and Underperform. Unlike many Wall Street firms, we maintain a balance between the number of Outperform and Neutral recommendations. Our team of 70 analysts are fully versed in the benefits of earnings estimate revisions and how that is harnessed through the Zacks quantitative rating system. But we have given our analysts the ability to override the Zacks Recommendation for the 1200 stocks that they follow. The reason for the analyst over-rides is that there are often factors such as valuation, industry conditions and management effectiveness that a trained investment professional can spot better than a quantitative model.

Zacks Rank

The Zacks Rank is our short-term rating system that is most effective over the one- to three-month holding horizon. The underlying driver for the quantitatively-determined Zacks Rank is the same as the Zacks Recommendation, and reflects trends in earnings estimate revisions.

Zacks Style Scores

The Zacks Style Score is as a complementary indicator to the Zacks rating system, giving investors a way to focus on the highest rated stocks that best fit their own stock picking preferences.

Academic research has proven that stocks with the best Value, Growth and Momentum characteristics outperform the market. The Zacks Style Scores rate stocks on each of these individual styles and assigns a rating of A, B, C, D and F. We also produce the VGM Score (V for Value, G for Growth and M for Momentum), which combines the weighted average of the individual Style Scores into one score. This is perfectly suited for those who want their stocks to have the best scores across the board.

Value Score	B
Growth Score	D
Momentum Score	D
VGM Score	C

As an investor, you want to buy stocks with the highest probability of success. That means buying stocks with a Zacks Recommendation of Outperform, which also has a Style Score of an A or a B.

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Returns quoted represent past performance which is no guarantee of future results. Investment returns and principal value will fluctuate so that when shares are redeemed, they may be worth more or less than their original cost. Current performance may be higher or lower than the performance shown.

Investing involves risk; principal loss is possible. There is no guarantee that companies that can issue dividends will declare, continue to pay or increase dividends.

Glossary of Terms and Definitions

52-Week High-Low: The range of the highest and lowest prices at which a stock has traded during the past year. This range is determined based on the stock's daily closing price which may differ from the intra-day high or low. Many investors use it as a technical indicator to determine a stock's current value and future price movement. The idea here is that if price breaks out from the 52-week range, in either direction, the momentum may continue in the same direction.

20-Day Average Volume (Shares): The average number of shares of a company traded in a day over the last 20 days. It is a direct indication of a security's overall liquidity. The higher the average daily trading volume, the easier it is to enter or exit the stock at a desired price with more buyers and sellers being available.

Daily Price Change: This is the percentage difference between a trading day's closing price and the prior trading day's closing price. This item is updated at 9 p.m. EST each day.

1-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 5 trading days. This change reflects the collective buying and selling sentiment over the 1-week period.

A strong weekly price increase for the stock, especially when accompanied by increased volume, is an indication of it gaining momentum.

4-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 20 trading days or past 4 weeks. This is a medium-term price change metric and an indication of the stock gaining momentum.

12-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change of a stock's closing price over the last 60 trading days or past 12 weeks. Similar to 4-week price change, this is a medium-term price change metric. It shows whether a stock has been enjoying strong investor demand, or if it has been in consolidation, or distress over this period.

52-Week Price Change: This is the percentage change in a stock's closing price over the last 260 trading days or past 52 weeks. This long-term price change metric is a good reference point for investors. Some investors seek stocks with the best percentage price change over the last 52 weeks, expecting the momentum to continue.

Market Cap: The number of outstanding common shares of a company times its latest price per share. This figure represents a company's size, which indicates various characteristics, including price stability and risk, in which investors could be interested.

Year-To-Date Price Change: Change in a stock's daily closing price in the period of time beginning the first day of the current calendar year through to the previous trading day.

of Analysts: Number of EPS estimates used in calculating the current-quarter consensus. These estimates come from the brokerage analysts tracking this stock. However, the number of such analysts tracking this stock may not match the number of estimates, as all brokerage analysts may not come up with an estimate or provide it to us.

Beta: A measure of risk commonly used to compare the volatility of a stock to the overall market. The S&P 500 Index is the base for calculating beta and carries a value of 1. A stock with beta below 1 is less risky than the market as a whole. And a stock with beta above 1 is riskier.

Dividend: The portion of earnings a company is expected to distribute to its common shareholders in the next 12 months for each share they own. Dividends are usually paid quarterly. Dividend payments reflect positively on a company and help maintain investors' trust. Investors typically find dividend-paying stocks appealing because the dividend adds to any market price appreciation to result in higher return on investment (ROI). Moreover, a steady or increasing dividend payment provides investors a cushion in a down market.

Dividend Yield: The ratio of a company's annual dividend to its share price. The annual dividend used in the ratio is calculated based on the most recent dividend paid by the company. Dividend yield is an estimate of the dividend-only return from a stock in the next 12 months. Since dividend itself doesn't change frequently, dividend yield usually changes with a stock's price movement. As a result, often an unusually high dividend yield is a result of weak stock price.

S&P 500 Index: The Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500) Index is an unmanaged group of securities considered to be representative of the stock market in general. It is a market-capitalization-weighted index of stocks of the 500 largest U.S. companies. Each stock's weight in the index is proportionate to its market value.

Industry: One of the 250+ groups that Zacks classifies all stocks into based on the nature of business. These groups are termed as expanded (aka "X") industries and map to their respective (economic) sectors; Zacks has 16 sectors.

Zacks Industry Rank: The Zacks Industry Rank is determined by calculating the average Zacks Rank for all stocks in the industry and then assigning an ordinal rank to it. For example, an industry with an average Zacks Rank of 1.6 is better than an industry with an average Zacks Rank of 2.3. So, the industry with the better average Zacks Rank would get a better Zacks Industry Rank. If an industry has the best average Zacks Rank, it would be considered the top industry (1 out of 250+), which would place it at the top 1% of Zacks-ranked industries. Studies have shown that roughly half of a stock's price movement can be attributed to the industry group it belongs to. In fact, the top 50% of Zacks-ranked industries outperforms the bottom 50% by a factor of more than 2 to 1.

Last EPS Surprise: The percentage deviation of a company's last reported earnings per share from the Zacks Consensus Estimate. Companies with a positive earnings surprise are more likely to surprise again in the future (or miss again if they recently missed).

Last Sales Surprise: The percentage deviation of a company's last reported sales from the Zacks Consensus Estimate.

Expected Report Date: This is an estimated date of a company's next earnings release. The information originated or gathered by Zacks Investment Research from its information providers or publicly available sources is the basis of this estimate.

Earnings ESP: The Zacks Earnings ESP compares the Most Accurate Estimate to the Zacks Consensus Estimate for the yet-to-be reported quarter. The Most Accurate Estimate is the most recent version of the Zacks Consensus EPS Estimate. The idea here is that analysts revising their estimates closer to an earnings release have the latest information, which could potentially be more accurate than what they and others contributing to the consensus had predicted earlier. Thus, a positive or negative Earnings ESP reading theoretically indicates the likely deviation of the actual earnings from the consensus estimate. However, the model's predictive power is significant for positive ESP readings only. A positive Earnings ESP is a strong predictor of an earnings beat, particularly when combined with a Zacks Rank #1 (Strong Buy), #2 (Buy) or #3 (Hold). Our research shows that stocks with this combination produce a positive surprise nearly 70% of the time.

Periods:

TTM: Trailing 12 months. Using TTM figures is an effective way of analyzing the most-recent financial data in an annualized format that helps neutralize the effects of seasonality and other quarter-to-quarter variation.

F1: Current fiscal year. This period is used to analyze the estimates for the ongoing full fiscal year.

F2: Next fiscal year. This period is used to analyze the estimates for the next full fiscal year.

F12M: Forward 12 months. Using F12M figures is an effective way of analyzing the near-term (the following four unreported quarters) estimates in an annualized manner. Instead of typically representing estimates for the full fiscal year, which may not represent the nitty-gritty of each quarter, F12M figures suggest an all-inclusive annualized estimate for the following four quarters. The annualization helps neutralize the potential effects of seasonality and other quarter-to-quarter variations.

P/E Ratio: The price-to-earnings ratio measures a company's current market price per share relative to its earnings per share (EPS). Usually, the trailing-12-month (TTM) EPS, current-fiscal-year (F1) EPS estimate, or forward-12-month (F12M) EPS estimate is used as the denominator. In essence, this ratio shows what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of EPS. In other words, this ratio gives a sense of what the relative value of the company is at the already reported level of earnings or at a future level of earnings.

It is one of the most widely-used multiples for determining the value of a company and helps comparing its valuation with that of a competitor, the industry group or a benchmark.

PEG Ratio: The price/earnings to growth ratio is a stock's P/E ratio using current fiscal year (F1) EPS estimate divided by its expected EPS growth rate over the coming 3 to 5 years. This ratio essentially determines a stock's value by factoring in the company's expected earnings growth and is thus believed to provide a more complete picture than just the P/E ratio, particularly for faster-growing companies.

P/S Ratio: The price-to-sales ratio is calculated as a company's current price per share divided by trailing 12 months (TTM) sales or revenues per share. This ratio shows what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of TTM sales per share. The P/S ratio is at times the only valuation metric when the company has yet to become profitable.

Cash/Price Ratio: The cash-to-price ratio or Cash Yield is calculated as cash and marketable securities per share divided by the company's current share price. Like the earnings yield, which shows the anticipated yield (or return) on a stock from earnings for each dollar invested, the cash yield does the same, with cash being the source of return instead of earnings. For example, a cash/price ratio of 0.08 suggests a return of 8% or 8 cents for every \$1 investment.

EV/EBITDA Ratio: The EV/EBITDA ratio, also known as Enterprise Multiple, is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization). Usually, trailing-12-month (TTM) or forward-12-month (F12M) EBITDA is used as the denominator.

EV/Sales Ratio: The enterprise value-to-sales ratio is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by annual sales. It is an expansion of the P/S valuation, which uses market value instead of enterprise value. The EV/Sales ratio is perceived as more accurate than P/S, in part, because the market capitalization does not take a company's debt into account when valuing it.

EV/CF Ratio: The enterprise value-to-cash flow ratio is calculated as a company's enterprise value (market capitalization + value of total long-term debt + book value of preferred shares - cash and marketable securities) divided by the trailing-12-month (TTM) operating cash flow. It's a measure of how long it would take to buy the entire business if you were able to use all the company's operating cash flow.

The EV/CF ratio is perceived as more accurate than the P/CF ratio, in part, because the market price does not take a company's debt into account when valuing it.

EV/FCF Ratio: The enterprise value-to-free cash flow metric compares a company's enterprise value to its trailing-12-month (TTM) free cash flow (FCF). This metric is very similar to the EV/CF ratio, but is considered a more exact measure owing to the fact that it uses free cash flow, which subtracts capital expenditures (CAPEX) from a company's total operating cash flow, thereby reflecting the actual cash flow available for funding growth activities and payments to shareholders.

P/EBITDA Ratio: The P/EBITDA ratio is calculated as a company's per share market value divided by EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization). This metric is very similar to the EV/EBITDA ratio, but is considered a little less exact measure as it uses market price, which does not take a company's debt into account. However, since EBITDA is often considered a proxy for cash income, the metric is used as a measure of what the market is willing to pay today for each dollar of the company's cash profitability in the trailing 12 months (TTM) or forward 12 months (F12M).

P/B Ratio: The price-to-book ratio is calculated as a company's current price per share divided by its book value (total assets – liabilities – preferred stocks) per share. In short, the book value is how much a company is worth. In other words, it reflects the total value of a company's assets that its common shareholders would receive if it were to be liquidated. So, the P/B ratio indicates whether you're paying higher or lower than what would remain if the company went bankrupt immediately. Investors typically use this metric to determine how a company's stock price stacks up to its intrinsic value.

P/TB Ratio: The price-to-tangible-book value ratio is calculated as the per share market value of a company divided by the value of its tangible assets (total assets – liabilities – preferred stocks – intangible assets) per share. Tangible book value is the same thing as book value except it excludes the value of intangible assets to get a step closer to the baseline value of the company.

P/CF Ratio: The price-to-cash flow ratio measures a company's per share market price relative to its trailing-12-month (TTM) operating cash flow per share. This metric is used to determine whether a company is undervalued or overvalued relative to another stock, industry or sector. And like the P/E ratio, a lower number is typically considered better from the value perspective.

One of the reasons why P/CF ratio is often preferred over P/E ratio is the fact that operating cash flow adds back non-cash expenses such as depreciation and amortization to net income. This feature helps valuing stocks that have positive cash flow but are not profitable because of large noncash charges.

P/FCF Ratio: The price-to-free cash flow ratio is an extension of P/CF ratio, which uses trailing-12-month (TTM) free cash flow per share instead of operating cash flow per share. This metric is considered a more exact measure than P/CF ratio, as free cash flow subtracts capital expenditures (CAPEX) from a company's total operating cash flow, thereby reflecting the actual cash flow available for funding activities that generate additional revenues.

Earnings Yield: The earnings yield is calculated as current fiscal year (F1) EPS estimate divided by the company's current share price. The ratio, which is the inverse of the P/E ratio, measures the anticipated yield (or return) from earnings for each dollar invested in a stock today.

For example, earnings yield for a stock, which is trading at \$35 and expected to earn \$3 per share in the current fiscal year (F1), would be 0.0857 ($3/35 = 0.0857$) or 8.57%. In other words, for \$1 invested in the stock today, the yield from earnings is anticipated to be 8.57 cents.

Investors most commonly compare the earnings yield of a stock to that of a broad market index (such as the S&P 500) and prevailing interest rates, such as the current 10-year Treasury yield. Since bonds and stocks compete for investors' dollars, stock investors typically demand a higher yield for the extra risk they assume compared to investors of U.S. Treasury-backed securities that offer virtually risk-free returns. This additional return is referred to as the risk premium.

Debt/Equity Ratio: The debt-to-equity ratio is calculated as a company's total liabilities divided by its shareholder equity. This metric is used to gauge a company's financial leverage. In other words, it is a measure of the degree to which a company is financing its operations through debt versus its own funds. The higher the ratio, the higher the risk for shareholders.

However, this ratio is difficult to compare across industry groups where ideal amounts of debt vary. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-equity ratio should be compared with other companies in the same industry.

Cash Flow (\$/share): Cash flow per share is calculated as operating cash flow (after-tax earnings + depreciation + other non-cash charges) divided by common shares outstanding. It is used by many investors as a measure of a company's financial strength. Since cash flow per share takes into consideration a company's ability to generate cash by adding back non-cash expenses, it is regarded by some as a more accurate measure of a company's financial situation than earnings per share, which could be artificially deflated.

Current Ratio: The current ratio or liquidity ratio is a company's current assets divided by its current liabilities. It measures a company's ability to pay short-term obligations. A current ratio that is in line with the industry average or slightly higher is generally considered acceptable. A current ratio that is lower than the industry average would indicate a higher risk of distress or default. A higher number is usually better. However, a very high current ratio compared to the industry average could be an indication of inefficient use of assets by management.

Debt/Capital Ratio: Debt-to-capital ratio is a company's total debt (interest-bearing debt + both short- and long-term liabilities) divided its total capital (interest-bearing debt + shareholders' equity). It is a measure of a company's financial leverage. All else being equal, the higher the debt-to-capital ratio, the riskier the stock.

However, this ratio can vary widely from industry to industry, the ideal amount of required debt being different. Some businesses are more capital intensive than others and typically require higher debt to finance their operations. So, a company's debt-to-capital ratio should be compared with the same for its industry.

Net Margin: Net margin is calculated as net income divided by sales. It shows how much of each dollar in sales generated by a company translates into profit. For example, if a company's net margin is 15%, its net income is 15 cents for every \$1 of sales it makes.

A change in margin can reflect either a change in business conditions, or a company's cost controls, or both. If a company's expenses are growing faster than sales, its net margin will decline. However, different net margin rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare net margin rates of companies in the same industry group.

Return on Equity: Return on equity (ROE) is calculated as trailing-12-month net income divided by trailing-12-month average shareholder equity (including reinvested earnings). This metric is considered a measure of how effectively management is using a company's assets to generate profits. For example, if a company's ROE is 10%, it creates 10 cents profits for every \$1 shareholder equity, which is basically the company's assets minus debt. A company's ROE deemed good or bad depends on what's normal for its peers or industry group.

Sales/Assets Ratio: The sales-to-assets ratio or asset utilization ratio or asset turnover ratio is calculated as a company's annual sales divided by average assets (average of assets at the beginning of the year and at the year's end). This metric helps investors understand how effectively a company is using its assets to generate sales. For example, a sales-to-assets ratio of 2.5 indicates that the company generated \$2.50 in sales for every \$1 of assets on its books.

The higher the sales-to-assets ratio, the better the company is performing. However, similar to many other ratios, the asset turnover ratio tends to be higher for companies in certain industries/sectors than in others. So, a company's sales-to-assets ratio should be compared with the same for its industry/sector.

Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years): This is the average annual (trailing-12-month) EPS growth rate over the last 3-5 years. This metric helps investors see how a company's EPS has grown from a long-term perspective.

Note: There are many factors that can influence short-term numbers — a recession will reduce this number, while a recovery will inflate it. The longterm perspective helps smooth out short-term events.

Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0): This is the estimated EPS growth rate for the current financial year. It is calculated as the consensus estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported EPS for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Current Cash Flow Growth: It measures the latest year-over-year change in operating cash flow. Cash flow growth tells an investor how quickly a company is generating inflows of cash from operations. A positive change in the cash flow is desired and shows that more 'cash' is coming in than going out.

Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years): This is the annualized change in cash flow over the last 3-5 years. The change in a longer period helps put the current reading into proper perspective. By looking at the rate, rather than the actual dollar value, the comparison across the industry and peers becomes easier.

Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0): This metric looks at the estimated sales growth for the current year. It is calculated as sales estimate for the current fiscal year (F1) divided by the reported sales for the last completed fiscal year (F0).

Like EPS growth, a higher rate is better for sales growth. A look at a company's projected sales growth instantly tells you what the outlook is for their products and services. However, different sales growth rates are considered good for different industries, so it's better to compare sales growth rates of companies in the same industry group.

EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past week. The change in a company's consensus EPS estimate (or earnings estimate revision) has proven to be strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares. It is an integral part of the Zacks Rank.

If a stock's consensus EPS estimate is \$1.10 now versus \$1.00 a week ago, that will be reflected as a 10% upward revision. If, on the other hand, it went from \$1.00 to 90 cents, that would be a 10% downward revision.

EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past four weeks.

A stock's earnings estimate revision in a 1-week period is important. But it's more meaningful to look at the longer-term revision. And, of course, the 4-week change helps put the 1-week change into proper perspective.

EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year over the past 12 weeks.

This metric essentially shows how the consensus EPS estimate has changed over a period longer than 1 week or 4 weeks.

EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change: The percentage change in the Zacks Consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal quarter over the past four weeks.

While the revision in consensus EPS estimate for the current fiscal year is strongly correlated with the near-term price movement of its shares, the estimate revision for the current fiscal quarter is an important metric as well, especially over the short term, and particularly as a stock approaches its earnings date. If a stock's Q1 EPS estimate decreases ahead of its earnings release, it's usually a negative sign, whereas an increase is a positive sign.