Kansas City Southern (KSU)

$179.01 (As of 10/16/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **$188.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months	**Zacks Recommendation:** (Since: 12/23/19) Prior Recommendation: Outperform	**Neutral**
Short Term: 1-3 Months	**Zacks Rank:** (1-5)	**3-Hold**
	Zacks Style Scores:	VGM:B
	Value: C | Growth: C | Momentum: A	

Summary

Kansas City Southern is being aided by increased efficiency and reduced costs, thanks to the precision-scheduled railroading (PSR) model. With gradual recovery in volumes, the company now estimates its 2020 adjusted earnings to slightly increase year over year. Previously it expected the same to be roughly similar to $6.90 reported in 2019. Moreover, the company expects to enter into accelerated share-repurchase agreements to buy back shares worth $500 million. Nevertheless, with coronavirus concerns continuing, volumes are still weak. Total volumes declined 7% in the first nine months of 2020 and caused a 9% drop in the top line. Persistent softness in the industrial and consumer, as well as energy businesses, is concerning. Due to the volume-related woes, shares of the company have underperformed its industry in the past six months.

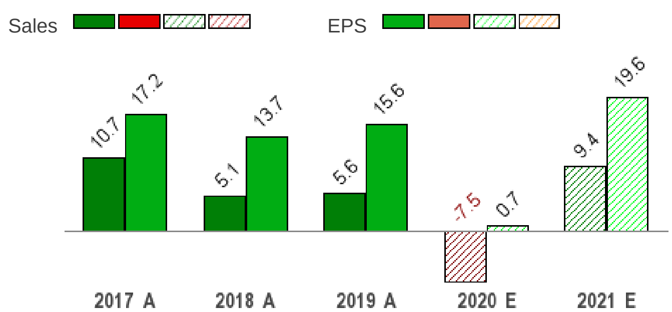
Price, Consensus & Surprise

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	**$200.00 - $92.86**
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	**757,266**
Market Cap	**$16.9 B**
Year-To-Date Price Change	**16.9%**
Beta	**0.94**
Dividend / Dividend Yield	**$1.60 / 0.9%**
Industry	**Transportation - Rail**
Zacks Industry Rank	**Bottom 29% (181 out of 254)**
Last EPS Surprise	**4.3%**
Last Sales Surprise	**-0.4%**
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	**0.9%**
Expected Report Date	**NA**
Earnings ESP	**-0.2%**
P/E TTM	**26.0**
P/E F1	**25.8**
PEG F1	**1.7**
P/S TTM	**6.3**

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Sales Estimates (millions of $)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	738 E	716 E	722 E	738 E	2,898 E
2020	732 A	548 A	660 A	706 E	2,650 E
2019	675 A	714 A	748 A	730 A	2,866 A

EPS Estimates

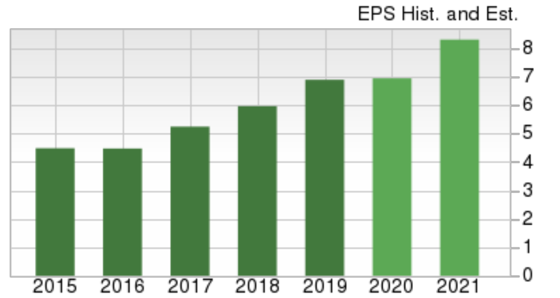
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	$2.08 E	$2.02 E	$2.03 E	$2.07 E	$8.31 E
2020	$1.96 A	$1.15 A	$1.96 A	$1.93 E	$6.95 E
2019	$1.54 A	$1.64 A	$1.94 A	$1.82 A	$6.90 A

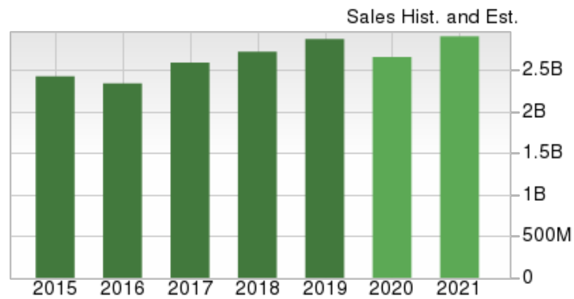
*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and Sales estimates, is as of 10/16/2020. The reports text is as of 10/19/2020.

Overview

Based in Kansas City, MO, Kansas City Southern is a transportation holding company that has railroad investments in the United States, Mexico and Panama.





The company was formerly known as Kansas City Southern Industries Inc. and changed its name to Kansas City Southern in 2002. Its U.S. holding is the Kansas City Southern Railway Company (KCSR), serving central and south central United States. Kansas City Southern controls and owns 100% shares of KCSR, founded in 1887. KCSR provides service to a ten-state region in the midwest and southeast regions of the United States.

Kansas City Southern through its various subsidiaries and alliances, provides rail transportation services over a network of more than 25,000 route miles across the United States, Canada and Mexico. The company's coordinated rail network provides shippers with an effective alternative by giving direct access to Mexico, the south-east and south-west United States through less congested interchange hubs.

Revenue are generated from haulage of chemicals and petroleum (This commodity group includes products such as chemicals, plastics, petroleum, liquefied petroleum gas, and petroleum refined products, such as gasoline and diesel), industrial and commercial products (forest products as well as metals and scrap), agricultural and mineral products (consists primarily of grain and food products), intermodal (road and rail) automotive products (it offers rail transportation to the entire automotive industry supply chain), energy (includes coal, frac sand, petroleum coke and crude oil) and others. Below we present the contribution of each sector to the top line in 2019.

Industrial & Consumer Products - 21.3%

Chemical & Petroleum - 25.7%

Agriculture & Minerals - 17.7%

Energy - 8.6%

Intermodal - 12.9%

Automotive - 8.9%

Other revenues - 4.9%

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Reasons To Buy:

> Increased efficiency owing to the precision-scheduled railroading model is aiding Kansas City Southern. The company's measures to reward shareholders are encouraging.

- ▲ With ramp up in economic activities, Kansas City Southern is seeing a gradual recovery in volumes. During the third-quarter conference call, the company stated that at the end of the third quarter of 2020, volumes were approximately 60% higher than the lows in early May. In fact, volumes rose 2% year over year in September. Owing to this improvement in volumes, the company now estimates its 2020 adjusted earnings to slightly increase on a year-over-year basis. Previously, it expected the same to be roughly similar to $6.90 reported in 2019. Additionally, adjusted operating ratio is predicted to be at the low end of the 60-61% range in 2020. Kansas City Southern expects volumes to keep improving in the fourth quarter and in 2021.

- ▲ Increased efficiency, courtesy of the precision-scheduled railroading model, and reduced costs are supporting Kansas City Southern's bottom line amid coronavirus-induced volumes softness. Notably, the company's bottom line increased year over year in the third quarter despite 11.8% decline in revenues as a result of 4% decrease in volumes. With 14.6% fall in operating expenses, operating ratio (operating expenses as a percentage of revenues) also improved to 58.8% in the quarter from 60.7% a year ago. The lower the value of the metric, the better it is. In 2019, the company realized PSR savings of $58 million. In 2020, it expects to generate PSR savings of $95 million.

- ▲ Trump's decision to indefinitely suspend plans of a 5% tariff on all goods imported from Mexico bodes well for Kansas City Southern. This is because the company generates a significant amount of revenues from Mexico. The announcement of a rollback in tariffs, made in June 2019, came after Mexico agreed to strengthen immigration enforcement. The United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) agreement, which came into force on Jul 1, is a major boon to the company. Replacing the 25-year old North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the USMCA streamlines North American trade and is expected to drive growth of Kansas City Southern through increased volumes.

- ▲ We are optimistic about Kansas City Southern's resumption of share repurchases in the second quarter. The company attributed this decision to the improving volumes. With this improvement in volumes and an upturn in financial performance in the third quarter from the second, the company expects to enter into accelerated share-repurchase agreements to buy back shares worth approximately $500 million under its $2 billion share-repurchase program announced in November 2019. In the first nine months of 2020, it repurchased 1.36 million shares at an average price of $319.67. Return to shareholders is up 50% year over year in the first nine months of 2020, thanks to 70% increase in share repurchases. The company's solid free cash flow generation capacity should lead to increase in such shareholder-friendly activities. Kansas City Southern's free cash flow is up 28% year over year in the first nine months of 2020. The company estimates free cash flow to be approximately $550 million in the current year. Moreover, Kansas City Southern's short-term debt stood at $10.9 million at the end of the third quarter, way below cash and cash equivalents of $646 million, indicating that the company has sufficient cash to meet its short term debt obligations.

Reasons To Sell:

Persistent weakness in the industrial and consumer business as well as energy business is concerning.

- Although volumes have improved from the lows in April and early May, it is still below year-ago levels. Total volumes declined 7% year over year in the first nine months of 2020 and caused a 9% drop in the top line. Given the ongoing coronavirus concerns and economic weakness, a full rebound in volumes is likely to take some time. This anticipated softness in volumes is expected to keep Kansas City Southern's top line under pressure.

- Despite gradual increase in economic activities, a few segments continue to experience substantial weakness. In the industrial and consumer business unit, the company's metals business is still significantly below year-ago levels. Moreover, with regard to the energy business, the company is seeing continued softness in crude shipments. In the industrial and consumer business, volumes are down 6% in the first nine months of 2020, while it is down 15% in the energy business.

- The company's trailing 12-month return on equity (ROE) undercuts its growth potential. The company's ROE of 13.9% compares unfavorably with ROE of 24.5% for its industry and 20.2% for the S&P 500 Index, of which Kansas City Southern is a key member.

Last Earnings Report

Kansas City Southern Beats on Earnings in Q3

Quarter Ending	09/2020
Report Date	Oct 16, 2020
Sales Surprise	-0.42%
EPS Surprise	4.26%
Quarterly EPS	1.96
Annual EPS (TTM)	6.89

Kansas City Southern's third-quarter 2020 earnings (excluding 5 cents from non-recurring items) of $1.96 per share beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate of $1.88. The bottom line also increased year over year despite coronavirus-related woes.

Meanwhile, quarterly revenues of $659.6 million lagged the Zacks Consensus Estimate of $662.4 million. Moreover, the top line fell 11.8% year over year due to weak volumes as a result of coronavirus-induced weak demand, lower commodity prices, lower fuel surcharge and currency-related headwinds. Overall carload volumes dipped 4% year over year with declines across majority of the segments.

In the reported quarter, operating income (on a reported basis) declined 3.7% to $271.5 million. Moreover, operating income (on an adjusted basis) fell 7.5% to $272 million. Kansas City Southern's adjusted operating ratio (operating expenses as a percentage of revenues) improved to 58.8% from 60.7% a year ago. The lower the value of the metric, the better it is. Operating expenses (adjusted) in the quarter declined 14.6% year over year.

Kansas City Southern's third-quarter performance reflects a significant improvement from the second when volumes declined 21% year over year. Owing to this upturn in financial performance, the company expects to enter into accelerated share-repurchase agreements to buy back shares worth approximately $500 million under its $2 billion share-repurchase program announced in November 2019.

Segmental Details

The Chemical & Petroleum segment generated revenues worth $191.9 million, down 1% year over year. While volumes increased 5% year over year, revenues per carload decreased 6% from the prior-year quarter.

The Industrial & Consumer Products segment's revenues logged $126.4 million, down 19% year over year. Business volumes and revenues per carload decreased 9% and 10% respectively, on a year-over-year basis.

The Agriculture & Minerals segment's total revenues decreased 6% to $125.3 million. Business volumes and revenues per carload slipped 3% each on a year-over-year basis.

The Energy segment's revenues of $46.8 million were down 28% year over year. While business volumes decreased 20% year over year, revenues per carload dropped 10%.

Intermodal revenues were $89.1 million, down 11% year over year. While business volumes inched up 2%, revenues per carload declined 13% year over year.

Revenues in the Automotive segment plunged 25% year over year to $48.5 million. While business volumes fell 18%, revenues per carload declined 9% on a year-over-year basis.

Other revenues totaled $31.6 million, down 6% year over year.

Outlook

The company expects its full-year adjusted earnings to slightly increase on a year-over-year basis. Additionally, adjusted operating ratio is predicted to be at the low end of the 60-61% range in 2020. The company continues to anticipate capital expenditures of $425 million or less in 2020. For the period 2021-2022, capital expenditures are still expected to be roughly 17% of revenues. The company estimates free cash flow to be approximately $550 million in the current year.

Recent News

Dividend Update — Aug 11, 2020

The company's board of directors declared a regular quarterly dividend of 40 cents per share on all outstanding common shares of the company. This dividend will be paid on Oct 7, 2020, to shareholders on Sep 14.

The company's board also declared a regular dividend of 25 cents per share on the outstanding 4% non-cumulative preferred stock of the company. The dividend will be paid on Oct 6, 2020 to preferred stockholders of record on Sep 14.

Valuation

Kansas City Southern shares are up 16.9% and 22% in the year-to-date period and over the trailing 12-month period respectively. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Transportation sector are up 17% and 7.1% in the year-to-date period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry and the sector are up 24% and 11.4%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index is up 8.2% and 16.1% in the year-to-date period and in the past year respectively.

The stock is currently trading at 25.98X trailing 12-month price-to-earnings, which compares to 25.22X for the Zacks sub-industry, 35.39X for the Zacks sector and 24.71X for the S&P 500 Index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 28.21X and as low as 14.3X, with a 5-year median of 20X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our $188 price target reflects 27.28X trailing 12-month earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for KSU

Valuation Multiples - KSU

		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E TTM	Current	25.98	25.22	35.39	24.71
	5-Year High	28.21	25.22	35.39	24.87
	5-Year Low	14.3	13.73	11.73	16.01
	5-Year Median	20	19.9	15.57	19.45
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	14.22	16.42	10.21	15.27
	5-Year High	17.18	31.25	11.09	15.68
	5-Year Low	8.48	7.86	5.13	9.55
	5-Year Median	11.32	12.61	7.25	13.1
P/S F 12M	Current	5.93	6.56	1.46	4.16
	5-Year High	6.51	6.56	1.46	4.31
	5-Year Low	2.83	3.04	0.85	3.18
	5-Year Median	4.06	4.64	1.21	3.67

As of 10/16/2020 *Source: Zacks Investment Research*

Industry Analysis **Zacks Industry Rank:** Bottom 29% (181 out of 254)

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Berkshire Hathaway Inc. **(BRK.B)**	Neutral	3
Caterpillar Inc. **(CAT)**	Neutral	3
Canadian National Railway Company **(CNI)**	Neutral	3
Canadian Pacific Railway Limited **(CP)**	Neutral	3
CSX Corporation **(CSX)**	Neutral	3
Norfolk Southern Corporation **(NSC)**	Neutral	3
Union Pacific Corporation **(UNP)**	Neutral	2
WEST JAPAN RAIL **(WJRYY)**	Neutral	4

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Transportation - Rail

	KSU	X Industry	S&P 500	CSX	NSC	UNP
				Industry Peers		
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	3	3	2
VGM Score	B	-	-	B	C	C
Market Cap	16.89 B	21.78 B	23.53 B	61.29 B	60.25 B	142.45 B
# of Analysts	8	7	14	10	10	10
Dividend Yield	0.89%	1.30%	1.6%	1.30%	1.72%	1.85%
Value Score	C	-	-	B	C	C
Cash/Price	0.04	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.02	0.02
EV/EBITDA	15.97	13.70	13.70	11.69	13.70	15.08
PEG F1	1.77	2.90	2.86	2.88	3.35	2.65
P/B	3.56	3.81	3.52	5.04	4.05	8.66
P/CF	16.56	13.39	13.27	13.39	14.65	17.91
P/E F1	26.58	25.20	22.31	22.43	24.30	26.47
P/S TTM	6.33	5.74	2.65	5.59	5.88	7.05
Earnings Yield	3.88%	3.83%	4.35%	4.46%	4.11%	3.78%
Debt/Equity	0.79	0.82	0.70	1.33	0.85	1.61
Cash Flow ($/share)	10.81	6.11	6.93	5.98	14.93	11.72
Growth Score	C	-	-	D	D	D
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	11.73%	11.73%	10.41%	23.81%	18.89%	13.50%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	0.72%	-9.35%	-2.95%	-14.34%	-12.92%	-5.39%
Current Cash Flow Growth	8.60%	0.86%	5.54%	0.86%	3.26%	-0.27%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	5.61%	5.61%	8.51%	8.74%	5.66%	2.78%
Current Ratio	2.44	1.08	1.35	1.62	1.21	0.96
Debt/Capital	44.24%	45.91%	42.91%	57.01%	45.91%	61.64%
Net Margin	20.63%	20.63%	10.28%	26.39%	20.47%	27.54%
Return on Equity	13.80%	20.92%	14.79%	24.24%	16.06%	32.45%
Sales/Assets	0.28	0.32	0.51	0.28	0.27	0.32
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	-7.52%	-7.52%	-0.53%	-11.38%	-13.04%	-10.25%
Momentum Score	A	-	-	A	A	A
Daily Price Change	-2.72%	-0.09%	0.08%	-1.14%	-0.27%	0.50%
1-Week Price Change	3.16%	2.21%	4.06%	1.72%	2.69%	4.80%
4-Week Price Change	-3.00%	-1.41%	2.93%	0.77%	-1.88%	4.07%
12-Week Price Change	15.39%	11.63%	5.43%	11.99%	16.99%	19.91%
52-Week Price Change	32.19%	14.80%	4.36%	14.80%	19.07%	28.21%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	757,266	245,310	2,066,999	3,872,319	1,236,749	2,499,950
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	0.51%	0.50%	0.00%	0.85%	1.20%	0.49%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	0.94%	0.96%	0.04%	1.48%	2.24%	1.67%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	4.47%	2.77%	3.55%	0.82%	3.58%	2.59%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	3.35%	1.78%	0.00%	0.21%	2.69%	1.47%

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	C
Growth Score	C
Momentum Score	A
VGM Score	B

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.

Disclosures

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Additional Disclosure

This material represents an assessment of the market and economic environment at a specific point in time and is not intended to be a forecast of future events, or a guarantee of future results. Forward-looking statements are subject to certain risks and uncertainties. Any statements that refer to expectations, projections or characterizations of future events or circumstances, including any underlying assumptions, are forwardlooking statements. Actual results, performance, or achievements may differ materially from those expressed or implied.

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 mediumterm 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 mostrecent 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 a 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.