

Plains All American(PAA)

\$8.91 (As of 03/24/21)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$9.50**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:

Neutral

(Since: 10/23/18)

Prior Recommendation: Outperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:B

Value: A

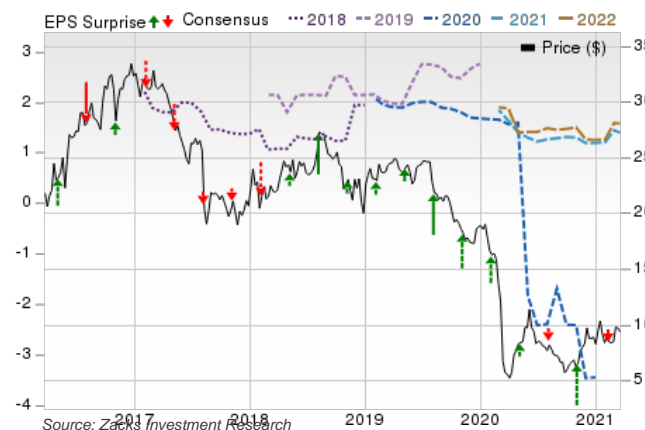
Growth: C

Momentum: F

Summary

Plains All American's strong presence in the Permian Basin, cost-saving initiatives, impressive credit profile of customers and recovery in production volumes will support its operations over the long-term. The firm's plan of expanding pipelines in resource-rich regions, developing new pipeline projects on its own and through joint venture is expected to boost operations. Units of the firm have outperformed the industry in the past six months. However, to fulfill stringent regulations and implement safety measures for protecting employees, the cost of projects can increase. Intense competition in the midstream space, soft hydrocarbon demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant demand for midstream services, as well as stringent regulations are headwinds.

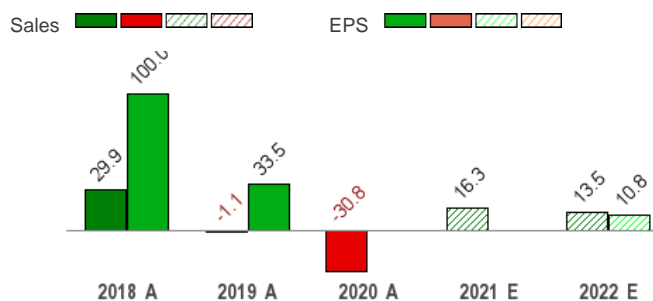
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52-Week High-Low	\$12.35 - \$4.53
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	5,188,181
Market Cap	\$6.4 B
Year-To-Date Price Change	8.1%
Beta	2.25
Dividend / Dividend Yield	\$0.72 / 8.1%
Industry	Oil and Gas - Production Pipeline - MLB
Zacks Industry Rank	Bottom 39% (155 out of 254)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	-6.5%
Last Sales Surprise	-17.5%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	-7.4%
Expected Report Date	05/04/2021
Earnings ESP	-6.0%
P/E TTM	5.8
P/E F1	6.4
PEG F1	NA
P/S TTM	0.3

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	7,937 E	7,994 E	8,111 E	8,366 E	30,757 E
2021	7,678 E	6,307 E	7,230 E	7,864 E	27,094 E
2020	8,269 A	3,225 A	5,833 A	5,963 A	23,290 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	\$0.37 E	\$0.35 E	\$0.38 E	\$0.43 E	\$1.54 E
2021	\$0.32 E	\$0.31 E	\$0.35 E	\$0.40 E	\$1.39 E
2020	\$0.55 A	\$0.25 A	\$0.46 A	\$0.29 A	-\$3.83 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 03/24/2021. The report's text and the analyst-provided price target are as of 03/25/2021.

Overview

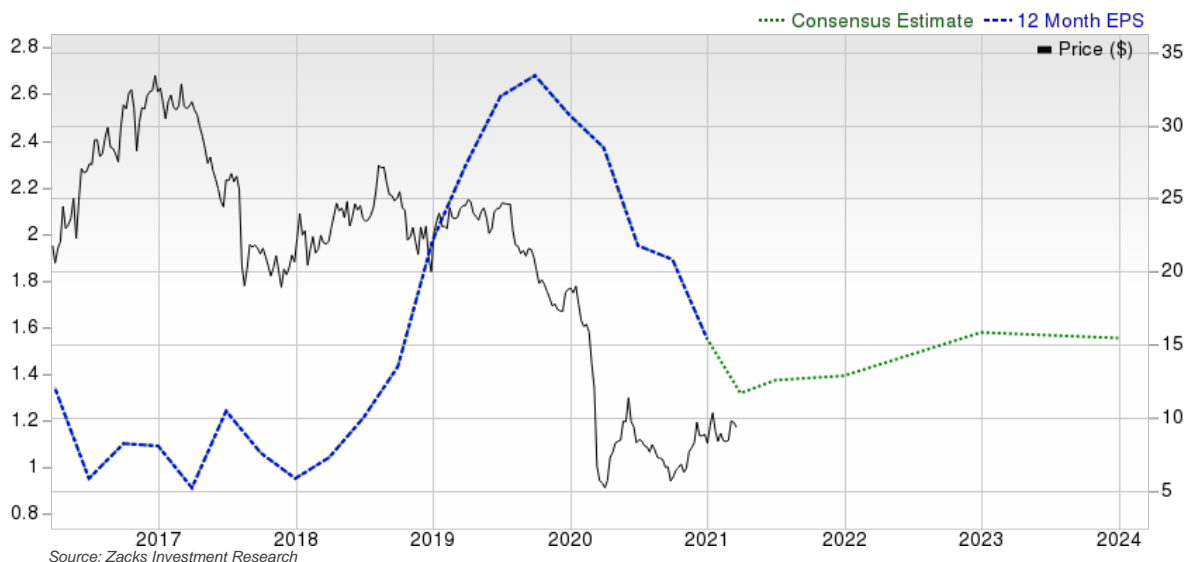
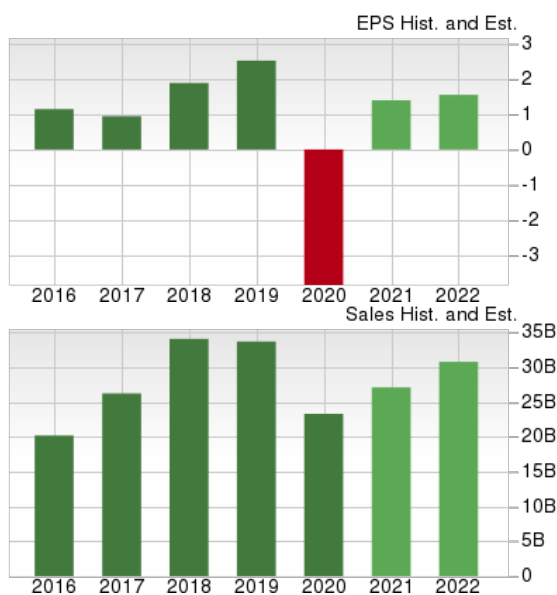
Founded in 1998, Houston, TX-based Plains All American Pipeline, L.P., a master limited partnership (MLP), is involved in the transportation, storage, terminalling and marketing of crude oil, natural gas, natural gas liquids (NGL) and refined products in the U.S. and Canada. The partnership has operations in the Permian Basin, South Texas/Eagle Ford area, Rocky Mountain and Gulf Coast in the U.S., and Manito, South Saskatchewan, Rainbow in Canada.

Plains All American Pipeline operates through three segments - **Transportation, Facilities, and Supply and Logistics.**

Transportation: The segment deals with the transportation of crude oil and NGL through pipelines, gathering systems, trucks and barges. It generates revenues through a mix of tariffs, third-party pipeline capacity agreements and other transportation fees. As of Dec 31, 2018, the transportation segment had 17,965 miles of active crude oil and NGL pipelines, plus gathering systems, as well as 830 trailers (primarily in Canada), 50 transport and storage barges and 20 transport tugs through its interest in Settoon Towing. Revenues for 2020 were \$2,020 million, down 12.9% year over year.

Facilities: The segment provides storage, terminalling and throughput services for crude oil, refined products and LPG as well as LPG fractionation and isomerization services. As of Dec 31, 2018, Plains All American Pipeline had a storage capacity of around 77 million barrels of crude oil and refined products, 32 million barrels of NGL, and 63 billion cubic feet of natural gas storage capacity. In addition, the partnership had eight fractionation plants located throughout Canada and the United States, with a total net processing capacity of nearly 211,000 barrels per day. Revenues for 2020 totaled \$1,138 million, down 2.8% year over year.

Supply and Logistics: Through this segment, the partnership purchases and sells refined products and LPG from producers, refiners and other marketers. Revenues for 2020 came in at \$22,059 million, down 31.6% year over year.



Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ Plains All American Pipeline maintains a systematic capital investment strategy to expand its operations through organic growth initiatives. It currently has some new projects in the resource-rich regions. After spending \$1.14 billion on capital expansion (including investment and maintenance) in 2020, the partnership decided to go slow on the ongoing capital project, given unprecedented economic crisis and uncertainty in the energy space, which resulted in excessive midstream capacity. The firm lowered 2021 capital expenditure (including investment and maintenance) view to \$620 million, while 2022 investment capital is expected in the range of \$200-\$300 million and maintenance capital to be less than \$200 million. Units of Plains All American have gained 51.3% over the past six months compared with the industry's 39.3% growth.

Systematic investments to expand operations, joint ventures, ample liquidity and strong profile of customers will allow the partnership to ride out this unprecedented crisis.

With a few of its capital projects being completed in 2020, the firm aims at preserving liquidity. Hence, cutting down capital expenditure for 2021 is quite justified, in consideration of the existing excessive midstream capacity. Plains All American might trim capital expenditure further if necessary. It is currently emphasizing on smaller projects to connect production and improve returns across its system.

- ▲ Plains All American Pipeline is gradually expanding its operation in the Permian Basin to capitalize on improving demand. The partnership has a 65% equity interest in Cactus II Pipeline, which was placed into service during 2019. Fourth-quarter Permian tariff volumes were down sequentially but as producers have started to gradually resume idled production, volumes are expected to recover. To partnership is poised to benefit from rise in production from the Permian region, with the gradual revival in oil and natural gas demand. JVs such as Wink to Webster, Diamond Pipeline, and Red River are expected to come online in 2021. All these projects, when operational, will strengthen the firm's position in the Permian Basin.

Plains All American Pipeline announced the formation of W2W Pipeline joint venture with the subsidiaries of ExxonMobil and Lotus Midstream, LLC. W2W Pipeline is working on the construction of a pipeline to transport crude oil from multiple locations in the Permian basin to the Texas Gulf Coast. The pipeline system is currently in partial service and phase 2 is expected to be completed in fourth-quarter 2021, and will be able to transport 1.5 million barrels of crude oil as well as condensate per day. This pipeline will have a positive impact on the partnership's operations.

- ▲ Revenues of the firm are generated by the services provided to customers. It is quite important to have knowledge about the financial standing of customers. Marathon Petroleum Corporation and Marathon Petroleum Corporation accounted for 13% and 12% of revenues, respectively, for the year ended Dec 31, 2020 and no other customer accounted for more than 10% of its revenues in 2020. A diverse customer base and strong credit profile of customers strengthen the firm's ability to meet financial commitments and ensures strong performance.

To preserve liquidity amid this unprecedented economic crisis, the firm is focusing on proper cost management. Through efficient cost management, the firm was able to save more than \$125 million in operating and general and administrative expenses in 2020. The firm will continue to execute cost-management initiatives in 2021 and beyond, which will boost margins.

- ▲ Plains All American Pipeline expects free cash flow after distribution to be more than \$1,000 million in 2021, if the proposed asset sales of \$750 million are properly executed. Given the expected increase in free cash flow, the firm aims for a \$500-million common equity repurchase program in 2021 to increase the value of unitholders. During fourth-quarter 2020, it repurchased 6.6 million common units for \$53 million.

The firm sold non-core assets in excess of \$3.6 billion in the 2016-2020 time period and aims to sell \$750 million worth of assets in 2021. The proceeds from the sale of non-core assets were utilized by the firm to fund investment capital projects and reduce debt levels.

- ▲ Plains All American Pipeline continues to enjoy a favorable financial position. As of Dec 31, 2020, the partnership had a liquidity of \$2.2 billion, which will be sufficient to meet operating, investing and financing requirements without accessing capital markets in the near future. At the end of fourth-quarter 2020, long-term debt of the firm worth \$9,382 million rose from \$8,187 million in the prior-year quarter.

The company's current ratio has been revolving near 1 over the past few years. The existing liquidity and current ratio indicate that the firm will be able to meet debt obligations in the near future without any difficulties. At a time when every entity is looking forward to preserve liquidity amid uncertainty as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, the stable current ratio of Plains All American Pipeline is reassuring for investors.

Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ The partnership currently has various projects in different stages of completion. Plains All American Pipeline requires access to funds to complete the projects on time and within budget. The ongoing decline in interest rates will act in favor of the partnership but any disruption in capital markets served might create difficulties in sourcing funds and delay the completion of capital projects. As a consequence, the partnership might fail to generate the anticipated profitability from its growth projects.
 - ▼ Hydraulic fracturing is an important and common practice that is widely used for the production of hydrocarbons from unconventional geological formations in the United States. However, hydraulic fracturing has been subject to increased scrutiny due to public concerns that it could result in contamination of drinking water supplies. So, legislation and regulatory initiatives relating to hydraulic fracturing could reduce domestic production of crude oil and natural gas. This in turn might lower the demand for midstream services provided by the partnership.
 - ▼ Plains All American's operations are subject to extensive federal, state and local regulations, managing transportation and processing of materials, protecting the environment and wildlife. Government organizations have already passed several laws to protect the environment and ensure operational safety. While the execution of all of these regulations increases the partnership's operating costs, violating them would pose risks of administrative, civil and criminal penalties.
- In addition, the outbreak of COVID-19 is going to have an adverse impact on demand for midstream services as majority of U.S. based E&P companies have lowered capital expenditures and production guidance.
- ▼ Upstream players like Noble Energy Inc., among others, have entered into the midstream business by forming MLPs and upgrading infrastructure. If this trend persists, midstream players will be up against tough competition as they generate revenues from exploration and production companies by providing transportation services.

Stringent government regulations, restriction on hydraulic fracking, outbreak of COVID-19 and increasing competition might be potential growth deterrents for the partnership.

Last Earnings Report

Plains All American Q4 Earnings Miss Mark, Revenues Lag

Plains All American Pipeline, L.P. reported fourth-quarter 2020 adjusted net income of 29 cents per unit, which missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of 31 cents by 6.5%. Also, the bottom line declined 54% from the year-ago quarter's figure.

In the quarter under review, the partnership reported GAAP net loss of 11 cents per unit against the earnings of 35 cents in the year-ago quarter.

Quarter Ending **12/2020**

Report Date	Feb 09, 2021
Sales Surprise	-17.54%
EPS Surprise	-6.45%
Quarterly EPS	0.29
Annual EPS (TTM)	1.55

Total Revenues

Total revenues of \$5.96 billion missed the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$6.71 billion by 11.2%. Further, the top line dropped 34.9% from \$9.2 billion reported a year ago.

Highlights of the Release

In the quarter under review, Plains All American's total costs and expenses were \$6,028 million, down 31.7% year over year. This reduction was owing to lower purchases and related costs, field operating costs as well as general and administrative expenses. The firm incurred an operating loss of \$65 million against the operating income of \$331 million in the prior-year quarter.

Total adjusted EBITDA for the quarter was \$559 million, down 35% from the year-ago quarter.

Net interest expenses decreased 5.3% year over year to \$108 million.

Segmental Performance

In the **Transportation** segment, adjusted earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) of \$383 million decreased 15% from the year-ago quarter's figure, primarily due to reduction in contracted tariff volumes in multiple regions caused by soft crude oil prices, reduced drilling and completion activity and compressed regional basis differentials.

In the **Facilities** segment, adjusted EBITDA summed \$172 million, down 2% from the year-ago quarter's figure. This fall was primarily due to the impact of asset sales and ramped-down activity at some rail terminals caused by less favorable market conditions. However, this was partly offset by operational cost savings and an expanded capacity at the Mid-Continent and Gulf Coast crude oil storage terminals.

The **Supply and Logistics** segment reported adjusted EBITDA of \$4 million, which tumbled 98% from the year-ago quarter's figure. This downtrend was primarily caused by less favorable crude oil differentials in both Permian Basin and Canada.

Financial Update

As of Dec 31, 2020, current assets were \$3,665 million compared with \$4,612 million at 2019 end.

As of Dec 31, 2020, Plains All American had a long-term debt of \$9,382 million compared with \$9,187 million on Dec 31, 2019.

As of the same date, its long-term debt-to-total book capitalization was 49%, up from 41% at the end of 2019.

Guidance

Plains All American expects its 2021 adjusted net income to be 95 cents per unit. The partnership retained its 2021 adjusted EBITDA expectation of \$2,150 million.

Plains All American expects its 2021 capital spending to be \$425 million.

Valuation

Plains All American units are up 8.1% in the year-to-date period, and up 50.2% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Oil & Energy sector was up 15.4% and 14.2% respectively in the year-to-date period. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry is up 51% and sector is up 45.1%.

The S&P 500 index is up 4.5% in the year-to-date period and up 50.9% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 4.27X of trailing 12-month Cash flow, which compares to 5.31X for the Zacks sub-industry, 6.15X for the Zacks sector and 23.9X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 30.14X and as low as 0.96X with a 5-year median of 7.23X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$9.5 price target reflects 4.55X of our 12-month Cash flow.

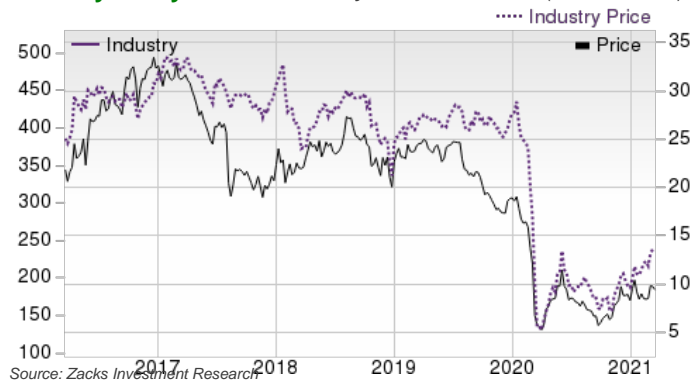
The table below shows summary valuation data for PAA

Valuation Multiples - PAA					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/Cash Flow	Current	4.27	5.31	6.15	23.9
	5-Year High	30.14	13.91	9.37	24.29
	5-Year Low	0.96	2.56	1.66	12.87
	5-Year Median	7.23	8.4	5.9	18.63
P/S F12M	Current	0.24	0.86	0.84	4.52
	5-Year High	1.06	1.62	1.46	4.52
	5-Year Low	0.07	0.41	0.6	3.21
	5-Year Median	0.49	1.01	0.96	3.69
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	4.01	8.67	5.82	17.38
	5-Year High	22.49	14.98	10.56	17.68
	5-Year Low	2.98	6.64	3.1	9.62
	5-Year Median	13.63	13.07	6.02	13.33

As of 3/24/2021

Source: Zacks Investment Research

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Bottom 39% (155 out of 254)



Top Peers

Company (Ticker)	Rec	Rank
Crestwood Equity Partners LP (CEQP)	Neutral	3
Enable Midstream Partners, LP (ENBL)	Neutral	3
Enterprise Products Partners L.P. (EPD)	Neutral	3
Energy Transfer LP (ET)	Neutral	3
Magellan Midstream Partners, L.P. (MMP)	Neutral	4
NuStar Energy L.P. (NS)	Neutral	3
Shell Midstream Partners, L.P. (SHLX)	Neutral	3
Delek Logistics Partners, L.P. (DKL)	Underperform	5

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

Industry Comparison Industry: Oil And Gas - Production Pipeline - Mlb				Industry Peers		
	PAA	X Industry	S&P 500	ENBL	EPD	ET
Zacks Recommendation (Long Term)	Neutral	-	-	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Zacks Rank (Short Term)	3	-	-	3	3	3
VGM Score	B	-	-	B	B	B
Market Cap	6.43 B	1.80 B	28.51 B	2.84 B	48.80 B	20.62 B
# of Analysts	9	3	13	2	8	7
Dividend Yield	8.08%	9.39%	1.41%	10.15%	8.05%	7.99%
Value Score	A	-	-	A	B	A
Cash/Price	0.01	0.02	0.06	0.00	0.02	0.02
EV/EBITDA	17.96	10.27	15.86	10.43	10.27	11.23
PEG F1	NA	0.84	2.30	NA	NA	NA
P/B	0.86	1.92	3.82	0.42	1.92	0.66
P/CF	1.43	6.34	15.83	3.73	6.95	6.45
P/E F1	6.34	8.85	21.27	10.50	10.81	7.45
P/S TTM	0.28	1.79	3.23	1.15	1.79	0.53
Earnings Yield	15.60%	10.20%	4.64%	9.52%	9.25%	13.37%
Debt/Equity	1.26	1.66	0.67	0.59	1.12	1.64
Cash Flow (\$/share)	6.23	3.56	6.78	1.75	3.22	1.18
Growth Score	C	-	-	D	D	D
Historical EPS Growth (3-5 Years)	29.63%	4.30%	9.32%	-1.40%	16.71%	-0.90%
Projected EPS Growth (F1/F0)	136.32%	-3.69%	14.55%	-10.14%	-1.90%	526.79%
Current Cash Flow Growth	68.88%	-2.73%	0.61%	-16.73%	5.25%	-54.20%
Historical Cash Flow Growth (3-5 Years)	43.59%	11.37%	7.32%	20.38%	11.37%	-3.41%
Current Ratio	0.86	1.15	1.39	0.65	1.10	1.07
Debt/Capital	49.07%	57.61%	41.42%	35.77%	52.98%	62.09%
Net Margin	-11.34%	13.88%	10.59%	3.57%	13.88%	-1.99%
Return on Equity	17.79%	17.72%	14.75%	4.92%	17.65%	6.85%
Sales/Assets	0.97	0.33	0.51	0.21	0.43	0.41
Projected Sales Growth (F1/F0)	16.33%	4.55%	6.95%	5.28%	6.13%	15.72%
Momentum Score	F	-	-	C	A	C
Daily Price Change	0.00%	0.23%	0.03%	-1.21%	0.31%	-1.17%
1-Week Price Change	-3.62%	-3.54%	-0.30%	-6.64%	-4.09%	-5.90%
4-Week Price Change	-0.56%	-0.28%	0.23%	-6.47%	1.22%	-6.03%
12-Week Price Change	6.45%	23.41%	7.22%	23.76%	14.43%	23.86%
52-Week Price Change	51.79%	81.17%	61.36%	232.14%	58.54%	55.08%
20-Day Average Volume (Shares)	5,188,181	529,362	2,433,322	1,460,247	7,775,262	23,326,404
EPS F1 Estimate 1-Week Change	-2.06%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.98%	0.00%
EPS F1 Estimate 4-Week Change	-7.39%	-0.23%	0.00%	8.77%	1.91%	1.99%
EPS F1 Estimate 12-Week Change	14.92%	0.94%	2.13%	6.90%	4.14%	-24.27%
EPS Q1 Estimate Monthly Change	-7.87%	-3.81%	0.00%	0.00%	2.31%	-4.63%

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	A
Growth Score	C
Momentum Score	F
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.

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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 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.