

# **ZTO Express (2057 HK)**

## 2Q24 core earnings +10% with stable unit margin

ZTO Express (ZTO) continued its strategic focus on profitable growth in 2Q24. Core net profit in 2Q24 grew 10% YoY to RMB2.74bn, which is largely in line with our expectation. Unit gross margin was largely stable YoY at RMB0.43/parcel in 2Q24. ZTO maintains the 15-18% parcel volume growth target in 2024E (same as previous guidance). It has declared an interim dividend of US\$0.35/ADR, implying a 40% payout ratio. With capex to gradually reduce going forward (<RMB6bn in 2024E), we expect ZTO to generate strong free cash flow over the coming years to support its dividend and buyback programs. We fine-tune our 2024E-26E earnings forecast by 2-3%. Our TP for ZTO US/2057 HK is slightly revised down to US\$38.1/HK\$299, based on 23x 2024E P/E (previously 24x), equivalent to the historical average. Maintain **BUY**.

### Key highlights in 2Q24 results:

- Core net profit grew 10% YoY. Reported net income in 2Q24 increased 3% YoY to RMB2.6bn, due to an impairment of RMB194mn (investment in Zhejiang Yizhan Network, a subsidiary of Cainiao Smart Logistics). Excluding the one-off items, the adjusted net profit grew 10% YoY to RMB2.74bn. The earnings growth was driven by (1) 10% YoY revenue growth, (2) a stable gross margin, and (3) an 82% YoY increase in net finance income.
- Parcel volume +10% YoY to 8.45bn units. Market share in 2Q24 dropped 3.9ppt YoY to 19.6%, as ZTO focused on profitable parcel volume growth.
- Parcel delivery ASP increased YoY, the only one among major players. ASP in 2Q24 increased 0.3% YoY to RMB1.24/unit (breakdown: reverse parcels +RMB0.06, parcel weight -RMB0.02, volume incentives -RMB0.04), much better than other players such as YTO (-4%), STO (-10%) and Yunda (-16%) that reported declines in ASP.
- Unit cost +0.7% YoY to RMB0.82/parcel. Unit cost of transportation decreased RMB0.03 (or -7% YoY) to RMB0.39/unit, helped by economies of scale and improved load rate. Unit cost of sorting hubs increased 5% YoY to RMB0.26/unit, as the increase in D&A expense on new equipment offset the standardization in operating procedures and an increase in automation level.

**Major risk factors:** (1) a prolonged price war; (2) a slowdown in online retail sales; and (3) increases in fuel costs.

### **Earnings Summary**

(YE 31 Dec)	FY22A	FY23A	FY24E	FY25E	FY26E
Revenue (RMB mn)	35,377	38,419	43,908	50,118	56,031
YoY growth (%)	16.3	8.6	14.3	14.1	11.8
Adjusted net profit (RMB mn)	6,719.5	8,579.0	9,962.1	11,551.1	13,098.7
EPS (Reported) (RMB)	8.16	10.48	11.26	13.84	15.69
YoY growth (%)	43.2	28.5	7.4	22.9	13.4
Consensus EPS (RMB)	0.00	0.00	12.09	14.11	16.02
P/E (x)	17.8	13.9	12.9	10.5	9.3
P/B (x)	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.7	1.5
Yield (%)	1.7	3.1	3.1	3.8	4.3
ROE (%)	13.0	15.4	15.0	16.7	16.9
Net gearing (%)	(37.5)	(41.6)	(41.5)	(44.5)	(48.3)
Source: Company data, Bloomberg	g, CMBIGM e	stimates			

### **BUY (Maintain)**

 Target Price
 HK\$299.00

 (Previous TP
 HK\$303.00)

 Up/Downside
 88.4%

 Current Price
 HK\$158.70

**China Logistics** 

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### Stock Data

Mkt Cap (HK\$ mn)	135,736.1
Avg 3 mths t/o (HK\$ mn)	177.5
52w High/Low (HK\$)	203.40/126.10
Total Issued Shares (mn)	855.3

Source: FactSet

### **Shareholding Structure**

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Alibaba	8.9%
Meisong Lai	25.9%

Source: HKEx

#### **Share Performance**

	Absolute	Relative
1-mth	3.7%	3.2%
3-mth	-16.8%	-6.7%
6-mth	10.0%	2.0%

Source: FactSet

### 12-mth Price Performance



Source: FactSet

### Related reports:

- 1Q24 core earnings beat estimates; Shifted to profitable growth strategy – 16 May 2024 (ZTO US: link) (2057 HK: link)
- High dividend pay-out target and expanded share buyback scale – 30 Mar 2024 (ZTO US: link) (2057 HK: link)
- Good execution but rising concerns on price competition –
   Nov 2023 (ZTO US: link) (2057 HK: link)

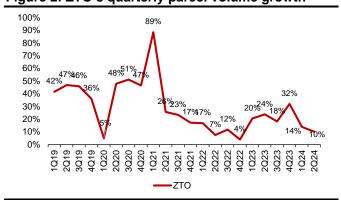


Figure 1: ZTO's 2Q24 results

(RMB mn)	1Q23	1Q24	Change YoY	2Q23	2Q24	Change YoY	3Q22	3Q23	Change YoY	4Q22	4Q23	Change YoY
Total revenue	8,983	9,960	10.9%	9,740	10,726	10.1%	8,945	9,076	1.5%	9,871	10,619	7.6%
Cost of sales	-6,460	-6,958	7.7%	-6,436	-7,105	10.4%	-6,501	-6,369	-2.0%	-7,099	-7,491	5.5%
Gross profit	2,523	3,002	19.0%	3,304	3,620	9.6%	2,444	2,706	10.7%	2,773	3,128	12.8%
Other income	214	161	-24.5%	79	188	137.7%	172	151	-12.2%	248	327	31.9%
SG&A expenses	-787	-897	14.0%	-505	-593	17.5%	-441	-434	-1.8%	-561	-700	24.9%
EBIT	1,950	2,267	16.2%	2,879	3,215	11.7%	2,175	2,424	11.4%	2,460	2,755	12.0%
D&A	686	786	14.5%	705	755	7.1%	665	745	11.9%	701	739	5.5%
EBITDA	2,637	3,053	15.8%	3,584	3,970	10.8%	2,840	3,168	11.6%	3,160	3,494	10.6%
Net finance income/(expense)	20	161	697.5%	95	172	81.5%	131	163	24.3%	36	140	291.8%
Finance income	92	245	166.6%	167	288	72.4%	162	246	51.7%	112	201	80.2%
Finance expenses	-72	-84	17.0%	-72	-116	60.4%	-32	-84	164.9%	-76	-62	-18.8%
Gain/(loss) on disposal of subsidiaries	0	0	n/a	-1	12	n/a	61	11	-82.1%	9	-5	n/a
Impairment of investment in equity investees	0	-478	n/a	0	-194	n/a	-26	0	n/a	46	165	255.7%
Fair value changes of financial instruments	156	43	-72.5%	52	55	6.2%	-23	9	n/a	37	-216	n/a
FX gain/(loss)	-10	5	n/a	81	15	-81.3%	31	5	-85.1%	9	18	98.3%
Share of profit of JV and associates	4	16	319.8%	0	4	3410.6%	-13	11	n/a	33	-10	n/a
Pretax profit	2,120	2,014	-5.0%	3,106	3,279	5.6%	2,335	2,621	12.3%	2,630	2,846	8.2%
Income tax	-455	-566	24.5%	-576	-665	15.5%	-439	-271	-38.2%	-501	-637	27.2%
After tax profit	1,665	1,448	-13.0%	2,530	2,614	3.3%	1,895	2,350	24.0%	2,129	2,210	3.8%
MI	6	-22	n/a	11	-2	n/a	40	-4	n/a	33	-18	n/a
Net profit	1,670	1,426	-14.6%	2,541	2,612	2.8%	1,935	2,345	21.2%	2,163	2,192	1.4%
Core net profit	1,515	1,862	22.9%	2,490	2,740	10.0%	1,924	2,326	20.9%	2,070	2,248	8.6%
Ratios:			ppt			ppt			ppt			ppt
Gross margin	28.1%	30.1%	2.1	33.9%	33.8%	-0.2	27.3%	29.8%	2.5	28.1%	29.5%	1.4
EBIT margin	21.7%	22.8%	1.0	29.6%	30.0%	0.4	24.3%	26.7%	2.4	24.9%	25.9%	1.0
After tax profit margin	18.5%	14.5%	-4.0	26.0%	24.4%	-1.6	21.2%	25.9%	4.7	21.6%	20.8%	-0.8
Effective tax rate	21.5%	28.1%	6.7	18.5%	20.3%	1.7	18.8%	10.4%	-8.5	19.0%	22.4%	3.3

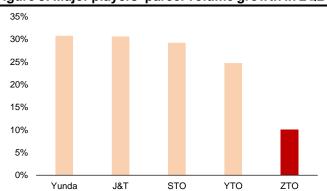
Source: Company data, CMBIGM

Figure 2: ZTO's quarterly parcel volume growth



Source: Company data, CMBIGM

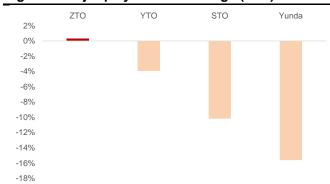
Figure 3: Major players' parcel volume growth in 2Q24



Source: Company data, the State Post Bureau, CMBIGM

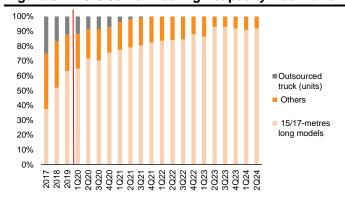


Figure 4: Major players' ASP change (YoY) in 2Q24



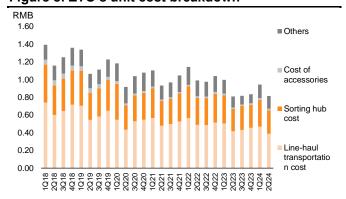
Source: Company data, the State Post Bureau, CMBIGM

Figure 6: ZTO's self-owned high-capacity truck ratio



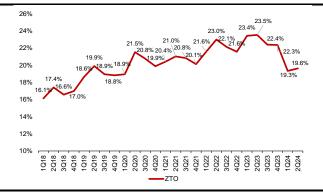
Source: Company data, CMBIGM

Figure 8: ZTO's unit cost breakdown



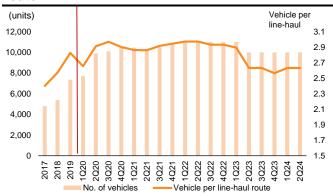
Source: Company data, CMBIGM

Figure 5: ZTO's market share in China in terms of parcel volume



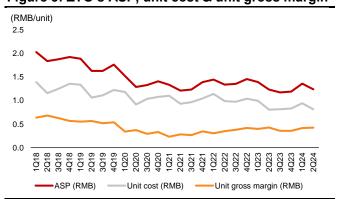
Source: Company data, CMBIGM

Figure 7: ZTO's number of vehicles per line-haul route



Source: Company data, CMBIGM

Figure 9: ZTO's ASP, unit cost & unit gross margin



Source: Company data, CMBIGM



Figure 10: Chang	ge in ke	y operating	assumptions
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	Old			New		Change			
	2024E	2025E	2026E	2024E	2025E	2026E	2024E	2025E	2026E
Shipment volume (mn units of parcel)									
Unit of parcel	35,638	40,984	45,902	35,034	40,289	45,124	-1.7%	-1.7%	-1.7%
ASP (RMB/unit)									
Per unit of parcel	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.23	1.22	1.22	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%
Unit cost (RMB)									
Line-haul transportation cost	-0.44	-0.43	-0.43	-0.44	-0.43	-0.43	-0.2%	-0.2%	-0.2%
Sorting hub cost	-0.27	-0.26	-0.26	-0.27	-0.26	-0.26	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Others	-0.12	-0.12	-0.12	-0.12	-0.12	-0.12	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%
Total	-0.83	-0.83	-0.83	-0.84	-0.83	-0.83	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%
Unit gross margin (RMB)	0.37	0.37	0.37	0.39	0.39	0.39	5.2%	5.1%	5.1%
(RMB mn)									
Revenue									
Express delivery, accessories & others	42,936	49,130	55,026	42,992	49,193	55,097	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Freight forwarding services	934	981	1,030	916	925	934	-1.9%	-5.7%	-9.3%
Total	43,870	50,111	56,055	43,908	50,118	56,031	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Revenue growth								ppt	
Express delivery, accessories & others	14%	14%	12%	15%	14%	12%	0.1	0.0	(0.0)
Freight forwarding services	3%	5%	5%	1%	1%	1%	(2.0)	(4.0)	(4.0)
Revenue	14%	14%	12%	14%	14%	12%	0.1	(0.1)	(0.1)
SG&A expense ratio	-5.8%	-5.7%	-5.7%	-6.4%	-6.2%	-6.1%	(0.6)	(0.5)	(0.4)
Core net profit	9,744	11,324	12,789	9,962	11,551	13,099	2.2%	2.0%	2.4%

Source: Company data, CMBIGM estimates

Figure 11: Earnings sensitivity to ASP and unit line-haul transportation cost

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2024E Net profit (RMB mn)		ASP (RMB/unit)							
		1.17	1.20	1.23	1.25	1.29			
	-0.457	7,670	8,673	9,342	10,010	11,014			
	-0.444	8,042	9,045	9,714	10,383	11,386			
Unit line-haul	-0.436	8,290	9,293	9,962	10,631	11,634			
transportation cost (RMB)	-0.427	8,538	9,541	10,210	10,879	11,882			
	-0.414	8,911	9,914	10,583	11,251	12,255			

Source: Company data, CMBIGM estimates

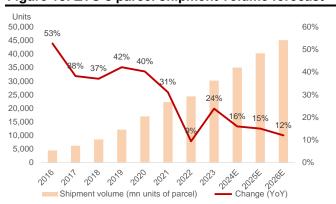
Figure 12: Earnings sensitivity to ASP and unit sorting hub cost

2024E Net profit (RMB mn)		ASP (RMB/unit)						
		1.17	1.20	1.23	1.25	1.29		
	-0.278	7,912	8,916	9,585	10,253	11,257		
	-0.270	8,139	9,142	9,811	10,480	11,483		
Unit sorting hub cost	-0.265	8,290	9,293	9,962	10,631	11,634		
(RMB)	-0.260	8,441	9,444	10,113	10,782	11,785		
-	-0.252	8,668	9,671	10,340	11,008	12,012		

Source: Company data, CMBIGM estimates

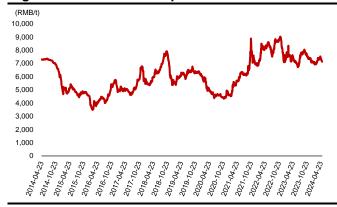


Figure 13: ZTO's parcel shipment volume forecast



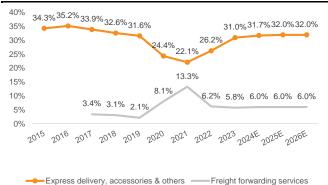
Source: Company data, CMBIGM estimates

Figure 14: China's diesel price



Source: Wind, CMBIGM

Figure 15: ZTO's gross margin trend



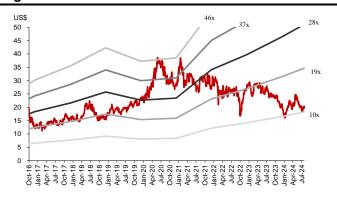
Source: Company data, CMBIGM estimates

Figure 16: ZTO's net profit forecast



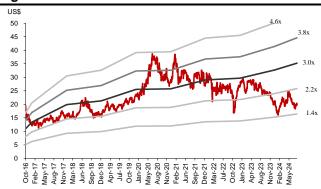
Source: Company data, CMBIGM estimates

Figure 17: ZTO US's P/E band



Source: Bloomberg, company data, CMBIGM estimates

Figure 18: ZTO US's P/B band



Source: Bloomberg, company data, CMBIGM estimates



# **Financial Summary**

INCOME STATEMENT	2021A	2022A	2023A	2024E	2025E	2026E
YE 31 Dec (RMB mn)						
Revenue	30,406	35,377	38,419	43,908	50,118	56,031
Cost of goods sold	(23,816)	(26,338)	(26,756)	(30,209)	(34,338)	(38,363)
Gross profit	6,589	9,039	11,663	13,698	15,780	17,668
SG&A expense	(1,876)	(2,077)	(2,425)	(2,810)	(3,107)	(3,418)
Others	790	775	771	878	1,002	1,121
Operating profit	5,503	7,736	10,008	11,766	13,675	15,371
Investment gain/loss	55	90	170	(563)	0	0
Share of (losses)/profits of associates/JV	(32)	6	4	18	19	20
Interest income	364	504	707	756	891	1,107
Interest expense	(127)	(191)	(290)	(311)	(311)	(311)
Net Interest income/(expense)	237	313	417	446	580	797
Foreign exchange gain/loss	(56)	147	94	21	0	0
Pre-tax profit	5,707	8,292	10,693	11,687	14,275	16,187
Income tax	(1,005)	(1,633)	(1,939)	(2,279)	(2,712)	(3,076)
Minority interest	54	150	(5)	(9)	(12)	(13)
Net profit	4,701	6,659	8,754	9,408	11,563	13,112
Adjusted net profit	4,700	6,720	8,579	9,962	11,551	13,099
Gross dividends	1,353	2,125	3,722	3,760	4,620	5,239
BALANCE SHEET	2021A	2022A	2023A	2024E	2025E	2026E
YE 31 Dec (RMB mn)						
Current assets	18,666	24,475	26,954	29,492	35,347	42,427
Cash & equivalents	9,721	11,693	12,334	14,608	20,030	26,959
Account receivables	933	819	573	871	20,030 859	1,136
Inventories	83	41	28	51	43	62
Prepayment	668	862	822	822	822	822
Other current assets	7,261	11,061	13,197	13,140	13,593	13,447
Non-current assets	44,106	<b>54,049</b>	61,512	65,008	67,355	69,096
PP&E	24,930	28,813	32,181	34,440	35,959	36,578
Deferred income tax	935	750	880	880	880	880
Investment in JVs & assos	3,730	3,951	3,455	3,673	3,892	4,112
Intangibles	36	29	23	17	11	5
Goodwill	4,242	4,242	4,242	4,242	4,242	4,242
Other non-current assets	10,234	16,264	20,731	21,757	22,372	23,280
Total assets	62,772	78,524	88,465	94,500	102,702	111,523
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Current liabilities	12,996	16,405	20,061	20,410	20,808	21,137
Short-term borrowings	3,459	5,394	7,766	7,766	7,766	7,766
Account payables	1,958	2,203	2,557	2,906	3,304	3,633
Tax payable	87	228	333	333	333	333
Other current liabilities	7,493	8,580	9,405	9,405	9,405	9,405
Non-current liabilities	848	7,646	8,124	8,124	8,124	8,124
Long-term borrowings	0	0	0	0	0	0
Obligations under finance leases	556	510	456	456	456	456
Other non-current liabilities	292	7,135	7,668	7,668	7,668	7,668
Total liabilities	13,845	24,051	28,185	28,533	28,931	29,261
Total shareholders equity	48,637	54,029	59,802	65,479	73,271	81,749
Minority interest	290	444	479	488	500	513
Total equity and liabilities	62,772	78,524	88,465	94,500	102,702	111,523



CASH FLOW	2021A	2022A	2023A	2024E	2025E	2026E
YE 31 Dec (RMB mn)						
Operating						
Profit before taxation	5,707	8,292	10,693	11,687	14,275	16,187
Depreciation & amortization	2,222	2,671	2,875	3,686	4,140	4,555
Tax paid	(1,005)	(1,633)	(1,939)	(2,279)	(2,712)	(3,076)
Change in working capital	158	1,498	700	(380)	(103)	(198)
Others	(225)	148	364	(464)	(599)	(817)
Net cash from operations	6,856	10,976	12,693	12,250	15,001	16,652
Investing						
Capital expenditure	(8,461)	(6,837)	(6,700)	(5,800)	(5,500)	(5,000)
Acquisition of subsidiaries/ investments	(670)	136	(200)	(200)	(200)	(200)
Others	11	(9,845)	385	56	191	407
Net cash from investing	(9,120)	(16,546)	(6,515)	(5,944)	(5,509)	(4,793)
Financing						
Dividend paid	(1,313)	(1,353)	(2,125)	(3,722)	(3,760)	(4,620)
Net borrowings	2,026	1,936	2,372	0	0	0
Proceeds from share issues	(3,811)	(85)	0	0	0	0
Others	194	6,560	0	(311)	(311)	(311)
Net cash from financing	(2,904)	7,058	246	(4,032)	(4,070)	(4,931)
Net change in cash						
Cash at the beginning of the year	14,213	9,721	11,693	12,334	14,608	20,030
Exchange difference	677	483	(5,783)	0	0	0
Cash at the end of the year	9,721	11,693	12,334	14,608	20,030	26,959

 $Source: Company\ data,\ CMBIGM\ estimates.\ Note:\ The\ calculation\ of\ net\ cash\ includes\ financial\ assets.$ 



### **Disclosures & Disclaimers**

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BUY : Stock with potential return of over 15% over next 12 months HOLD : Stock with potential return of +15% to -10% over next 12 months Stock with potential loss of over 10% over next 12 months SELL

**NOT RATED** : Stock is not rated by CMBIGM

OUTPERFORM : Industry expected to outperform the relevant broad market benchmark over next 12 months MARKET-PERFORM : Industry expected to perform in-line with the relevant broad market benchmark over next 12 months : Industry expected to underperform the relevant broad market benchmark over next 12 months **UNDERPERFORM** 

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