After Holiday Hangover, Rates Are Ready to Get Serious About Inflation Data

Mortgage rates partied hard for most of June and into the middle of last week--right up until stronger economic data killed the vibe. The resulting bounce in rates carried momentum through to the beginning of this week, but from there on out, things were broadly sideways.

That's not too surprising considering the lack of virtually any major economic data this week. Such data is one of the key sources of motivation for the bonds that underlie mortgage rate movement. Without it, inspiration had to be found elsewhere.

Last week's rising rate momentum lasted through Tuesday. After that, there was modest volatility surrounding trade-related headlines, Fed comments, and Treasury auctions, but nothing too significant in the bigger picture. By the end of the week, rates and Treasury yields were right in line with Tuesday's levels.

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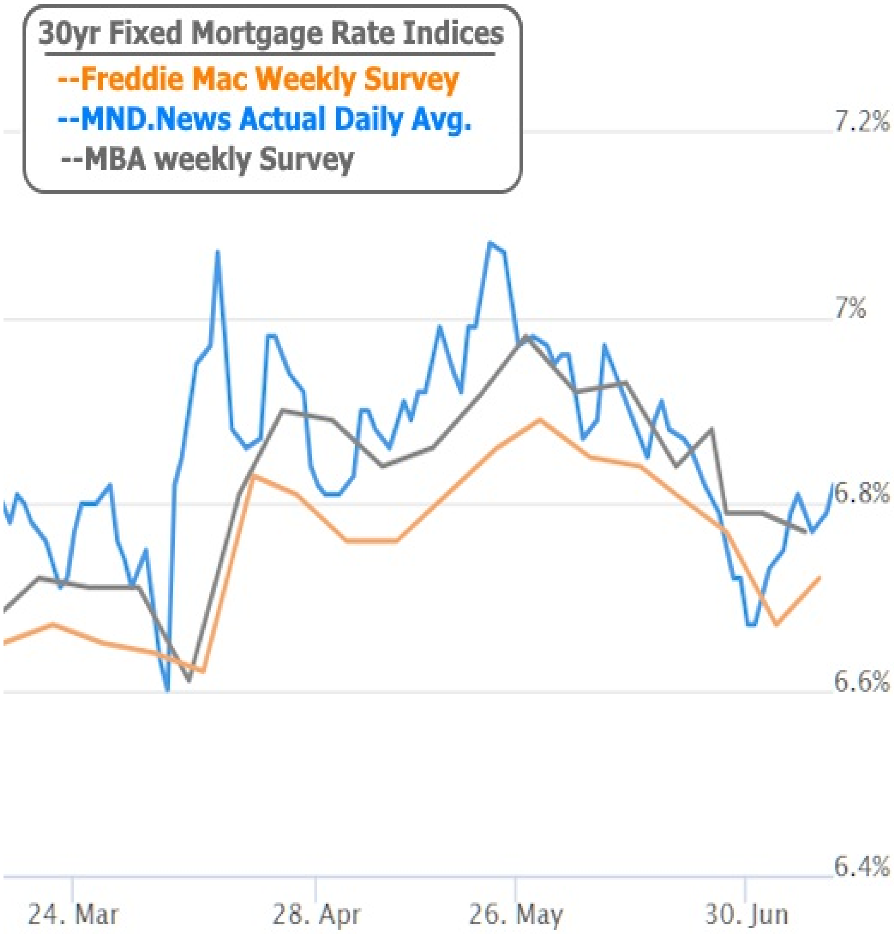

Actionable data will return in the coming week. In fact, Tuesday's Consumer Price Index (CPI) could be just as much of a flashpoint as the jobs report if it shows (or completely fails to show) the onset of tariff-driven inflation.

Why would that matter?

First off, bonds simply don't like inflation and rates will generally be moving higher if inflation is moving higher. Additionally, the prospect of tariff-driven inflation is preventing the Federal Reserve from initiating rate cuts that would otherwise be justified by the current landscape of econ data and monetary policy.

Bottom line: if inflation does NOT show up in a big way in next week's CPI, the market could move fairly quickly to price in expectations for a lower Fed Funds Rate. And remember: Fed rate cut EXPECTATIONS have a far more immediate impact on mortgage rates than an actual Fed rate cut.

Of course, the opposite scenario could play out as well (higher-than-expected inflation and another jump in mortgage rates).

There's no guarantee or even any reason to expect one outcome versus another. All we can know ahead of time is that there is a high potential for data-driven volatility.