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## ***Monday Morning Report – February 1, 2010***

### **Internal**

The Corridor Council hosted a briefing for over 50 emergency responders in **San Marcos** (1/25) by TxDOT and the Texas Transportation Institute on the new Intelligent Transportation System deployed on I-35 between **San Antonio** and **Austin**. The meeting provided an opportunity to identify gaps in various protocols between agencies in the handling of traffic incidents along the Interstate. A future meeting covering questions and requested information will be held this spring. For a draft copy of the I-35 incident management plan, e-mail [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org).

The Corridor Council's Executive Committee held an all morning strategic planning session (1/26) to discuss the Corridor Council's vision and goals for the future. Four main goals were established (infrastructure, economic development, regional public/private cooperation and advocacy for regional projects of significance). For more information please e-mail [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org)

### **Infrastructure**

California, Illinois, and Florida were the big winners in last week's Federal high speed rail grants, each picking up more than a billion dollars; Texas got less than \$10 million. Federal officials cited the 'lack of a central vision for rail statewide' as the reason for the state being short-changed, but others have pointed out the political realities: Texas went Republican in the last election; both US Senators voted against the stimulus package that created the rail funding, and the California and Florida legislatures have each passed billions of dollars in bonds to match Federal high speed rail funding. More details on the announcements [here](#).

One More Thing To Worry About: The Associated Press is reporting that due to soggy weather this year, Europe and the Americas will be suffering from a seed shortage just as the poor economy and surging interest in home gardening causes a spike in demand for vegetable seeds. Read more [here](#).

**Seguin** is launching a \$2.1 million construction project to improve the Walnut Branch Creek area, including hike-and-bike trails, lighting, walkways, landscaping, removal of debris, bank stabilization and a pedestrian bridge paid for by a grant from the Lower Colorado River Authority. [Details](#).

Ben Wear points out in the *Austin American-Statesman* this morning that TxDOT, despite a lot of angst statewide about a shortage of transportation funding, spent more money last year than at any time in its history, \$9.4 billion in lettings. It's an interesting summary of the last few years of transportation funding in the state and you can read it [here](#).

**San Antonio**'s VIA Metropolitan Transit's board has asked the Federal Transit Administration to finance \$25 million of a proposed two mile-long streetcar line along Broadway and South Alamo streets

Presentations, podcasts, and videos from TxDOT's Fifth Annual Texas Transportation Forum, held last month in **Austin**, are available [here](#).

## Economic Development (and ‘Other News’)

**Austin**’s proposed 10-year, \$500,000 economic incentive deal to help land the headquarters of Hanger Orthopedic Group not only brought a new employer to the **Austin** area but also re-opened a contentious debate on the ultimate value of economic incentives. *Details.*

Could a simple thing like switching recess and lunch get kids to eat better and play harder? Schools that have tried it report that when children play before lunch, there is less food waste and higher consumption of milk, fruit and vegetables. And some teachers say there are fewer behavior problems. *Details.*

A new trend of putting walk-in clinics in pharmacies is showing promise across the country. Recently, Duane Reade drugstores expanded its partnership with Continuum Health Partners to add twenty new locations for medical clinics where people can seek care without an appointment. *Details.*

The **San Antonio** Chamber of Commerce’s quarterly economic forecast shows that the **San Antonio** region has performed better than any other metro area when comparing business cycle index factors such as unemployment, real estate values, and job gains. *Details.*

**Bexar County** Judge Nelson Wolf and State Senator Jeff Wentworth were on hand for the unofficial opening of the new JW Marriott **San Antonio** Hill Country Resort & Spa last week. The official opening of this new 1,000 room resort on **San Antonio**’s north side will take place in March. *Details.*

**Travis County** is moving closer to purchasing an existing 15-story office tower in downtown **Austin**. The property located at 700 Lavaca Street includes a 675-car parking garage and allows **Travis County** to accommodate growth and expansion. *Details.*

The Federal Office of Management and Budget says **Burnet County** meets the criteria necessary to form a Micropolitan Statistical Area. This new area, called the **Marble Falls** Micropolitan Statistical Area, but encompassing all of **Burnet County**, will also result in a new **Austin-Round Rock-Marble Falls** Combined Statistical Area, allowing data users to analyze the entire six-county region, including the existing five-county **Austin** metro area and the new **Marble Falls** area. *Details.*

### Thought for the week:

*”Football combines the two worst things about American society – violence punctuated by committee meetings.”*

~ George Will (paraphrased)