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## ***Monday Morning Report – May 24, 2010***

### **Internal**

Rail advocates won a big victory Friday (5/21) when Attorney General Greg Abbott backed their view that a \$182 million contingent appropriations rider could be certified by Comptroller Susan Combs. In two opinions, one requested by **San Antonio** state senator Jeff Wentworth and one by Combs, Abbott cleared the way for the Comptroller to certify the rider and begin financing the Texas Railroad Relocation And Improvement Fund. Read *this op-ed* by Wentworth and others for the issues; Wentworth opinion is *here*; Combs opinion *here*. It looks like a win for the Lone Star Rail District, which pursued the rider.

The Corridor Council Executive Committee met (5/19) in **San Marcos** to get a first look at a draft “2010-2015 Strategic Plan” for the organization, learn **about San Antonio-Bexar County** MPO’s \$30 million commitment to Lone Star Rail, get updates on other rail and highway projects, discuss the upcoming **San Antonio** delegations to the **Shanghai** Expo, and review issues surrounding tonight’s vote on the highway 45 SW in **Austin**. For details email [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org).

### **Infrastructure**

TxDOT Rail Division Director Bill Glavin led the final of six statewide meetings in **Austin** on Friday (5/21) as part of developing the Texas Statewide Rail Plan. About 50 stakeholders swapped visions of how the state should go about improving freight and passenger rail over the next 25 years. Vision Workshop Austin. For more details, email [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org).

**Austin’s** Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization takes up their 25-year plan tonight (5/24) and the thorniest issue at stake is whether or not State Highway 45 SW – a connector from IH-35 to Mopac – stays in the plan. **Travis County** commissioner’s court voted to take it out; **Hays County** Commissioners Court wants it in: the CAMPO policy board decides tonight. Best odds are it stays in.

A toll road developer has offered to tear down and rebuild 10 miles of Interstate 35W from downtown to far north **Fort Worth** with a combination of toll and non-toll lanes. The proposal has a number of obstacles and many discussions ahead, but it may be the only mechanism to repair this major bottleneck in **Tarrant County**. *Details*.

Well, now you can call **San Antonio** attorney Jose Villarreal 'Ambassador:' US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton promoted him over the weekend for his work on the Shanghai World Expo, where the Union Pacific board member has been US Commissioner in charge of the American Pavilion. *Details* from the *Express-News*.

After years of discussion, **New Braunfels** officials begin creating 'quiet zones' this fall for railroad trains passing through the city: they've issued \$1.2 million in certificates of obligation to start building safety equipment that eliminates the need for train horns at intersections under Federal rules. By 2013 all 34 rail crossings in **New Braunfels** should be quieter, and safer, at a cost of about \$4.7 million. *Story*.

## Economic Development (and ‘Other News’)

Go early if you’re meeting someone at the Capitol: Metal detectors have been installed at the Texas State Capitol Building in **Austin** and visitors and their briefcases will be scanned in future. *Details.*

**Austin** film director Robert Rodriguez's new movie 'Machete' is stirring up more than fans: political activists are complaining that the violent take on current events along the border - involving a Mexican day laborer and a drug lord - doesn't deserve Texas state tax breaks for movie-makers because of its content. *Story.*

It looks like Sematech's 22-year history in **Austin** is indeed history: the high-tech research consortium is negotiating with New York state officials to move the International Sematech Manufacturing Initiative - a subsidiary that works on reducing the costs of manufacturing semiconductors - by early next year. *Details.*

**Bastrop County** is moving forward with plans for a new \$150 million Central Texas Airport. The proposed airport will focus on general aviation and would be located at the intersection of FM 1704 and FM 969. The facility is also being touted as the first “green airport” in the country.

NuStar Energy announced plans to develop a 32 acre, \$100 million new corporate headquarters at “The Rim” located along Interstate 10 and La Cantera Boulevard in Northwest **San Antonio**. *Details.*

UT **Austin** has partnered with local public radio station KUT to keep the iconic music venue - Cactus Café - open and keep its location in the UT Student Union. KUT will manage the evening programs and plans to develop a “Live from the Cactus Café” broadcast. *Details.*

**Kyle** has approved the construction of a larger community library, to be located downtown with an exterior that mimics city hall and a \$3.7 million price tag. Construction begins this fall. *Details.*

Led by hiring within the leisure and hospitality fields, both the **Austin** and **San Antonio** metropolitan areas kept unemployment rates constant at 7.0% and 7.3% respectively. Besides leisure and hospitality, the government sector also reported job gains for the month of April over the month of March. *Austin Stats* and *San Antonio Stats*

The US Army High Performance Computing Research Center has contributed \$150,000 to the St. Mary’s University’s School of Science, Engineering Technology. The plan is for the **San Antonio** based school to develop a high-performance computing laboratory, paving the way for participation in cutting-edge research. *Details.*

**San Antonio** based Trinity University has broken ground on a 55,000-square-foot Science and Engineering Center. The new building is part of a larger \$100 million building project that is scheduled to be completed in 2015. *Details.*

### Thought for the week:

*“Don’t worry about what people think of you; the truth is, they’re probably not thinking about you at all.”*

~Dr. John Milloy