

THE GREATER AUSTIN-SAN ANTONIO CORRIDOR COUNCIL



Monday Morning Report

December 3, 2018

INTERNAL

The next scheduled meeting for the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** Council Executive Committee is Wednesday, December 19 at 2pm at 304 N. CM Allen Parkway in **San Marcos**. RSVP or submit agenda items to council@thecorridor.org.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Maneuvering has already begun in **Washington DC** in anticipation of a new push during 2019 to revive President Trump's \$1 trillion spending plan to upgrade the nation's road, rail and energy infrastructure. The **Wall Street Journal** maintains that the program stalled last year as the administration pursued a repeal of the Affordable Care Act and the major tax cut he signed into law in 2017. [Story](#).

State public education funding and property tax relief are shaping up as the leading issues facing the 2019 Legislative session in **Austin**, but a state commission designed to solve problems with school finance has concentrated instead on finding ways to provide property tax relief, according to the **American-Statesman**. Transportation advocates are following this debate closely because gasoline taxes steered to school finance may be in play. [Story](#).

San Antonio city manager Sheryl Sculley announced her 2019 retirement last week (11/29), thirteen years after she was first appointed to the post and just one day after submitting a self-evaluation report to city council members. The move was seen by some as a reaction a restrictive charter amendment vote last month limiting the term and salaries of future city managers in Alamo City. [Story](#). [Reaction](#).

An adversarial but good-natured debate scheduled last week at an Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) event in **Bristol**, England turned into a believers versus non-believers argument over driverless automobile technologies. One participant labeled the technology 'a real joke' and 'commercially disingenuous.' He went on to say that the industry 'was about a business model where the hype IS the business model.' Sparks flew. [Story](#).

Austin is cracking down on Lime, the scooter company, for violations of the city's dockless mobility rules. 1000 of Lime's authorized units are being subtracted from their fleet for at least the next 30 days until compliance can be established. [Details](#).

Unsettling: Federal and local officials have determined that a July 20 apartment fire in **San Marcos** that killed five current or former Texas State University students was intentionally set. Neither motive nor suspects were disclosed at last week's press conference but a \$10,000 reward is being offered for information leading to an arrest. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and 'Other' News)

According to a **CityLab** report, big box retailers nationwide are slashing their property taxes through a legal loophole known as "dark store" theory, resulting in disaster for towns dependent upon that revenue.

Texas stands to lose \$2.6 billion in revenues if the big box retailers prevail in the courts. The "dark store" argument says that stores should be valued as if they were empty and merely upon their outer shells. "No win, no fee" tax consultants are exacerbating the problem. [Story](#).

The tourism and hospitality industry in **San Antonio** generated \$15.3 billion for the **San Antonio** economy last year, an uptick of \$1.6 billion from 2015 and derived from a whopping 37 million visitors, according to a Trinity University study. Visitors contributed \$213.7 million in tax revenues to city coffers, \$419 million to **Bexar County** and local school districts. [Story](#).

A new president took power over the weekend in Mexico, Andreas Manuel Lopez Obrador, better known as 'AMLO.' At his **Mexico City** inauguration Saturday the left-of-center Lopez Obrador vowed to focus on extinguishing drug cartel violence and protecting workers' rights. [Story](#). Analysis [here](#).

The world's largest producer of liquefied natural gas, Qatar, said today that it would leave the OPEC petroleum cartel January 1 after 60 years as a member - another signal of a deteriorating political situation among Middle Eastern oil producers. Qatar said it will increase gas production from 77 million to 100 million tons annually. [Story](#).

Early voting continues all this week through Friday for the Dec. 11 joint General and Special run-off elections. For a list of elections and voting places, start [here](#).

Thought of the Week

"We don't want an America that is closed to the world. What we want is a world that is open to America."

- George H. W. Bush

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