



**Austin-San Antonio
Corridor Council**

P.O. Box 1618
San Marcos, Texas 78667

Phone: 512-558-7360
Fax: 512-558-7365
council@thecorridor.org

www.thecorridor.org

Monday Morning Report – November 16, 2009

Internal

SPECIAL-CALLED MEETING - The Corridor Council Executive Committee will meet for a special called meeting on *this* Thursday, November 19th, 4-6 pm, at the Council offices in **San Marcos** to discuss long term strategy and goals for the organization. Please note that this is a different time and date from our regularly scheduled monthly meetings. Contact council@thecorridor.org or call 512-558-7360 for more information.

The Corridor Council's Transportation Task Force met last week (11/10) for updates on the IH-35 ITS/Emergency Responders program, the US 281 project, Texas Railroad Relocation Fund certification, and a current analysis of TxDOT's financial situation provided by CFO James Bass (lots of bad news here: TxDOT runs out of money for new construction in 2012 unless the Legislature acts). Email council@thecorridor.org for details.

The Economic Development Committee is scheduled to meet on Friday, December 11 at 10:00 am at the Corridor Council offices in **San Marcos**. All agenda suggestions should be submitted to TJ@thecorridor.org by December 1.

The Texas Greenbelt Coalition will meet *this* Wednesday, November 18 at 1:30 pm at the Greater **New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce Honors Hall** located at 390 S. Seguin Avenue. Please RSVP to rusty@nbcham.org or call 830-625-2385 for more information.

Infrastructure

At a Senate Transportation Committee meeting in **El Paso** last week (11/10), Senator Kirk Watson (D-**Austin**) questioned new Department of Motor Vehicles chairman Victor Vandergriff about the difference between what Vandergriff said the new agency would cost (\$3.4 million) versus what the Comptroller has been told the agency would cost (about \$75 million). The issue is central to certification of the Texas Railroad Relocation Fund, Watson said. Committee Chairman John Carona (R-**Dallas**) complained that "the game was rigged" against certification of rail funding and that the whole affair "smacked of trickery." Hear the exchanges [here](#) at 1:02:00 and 1:47:30. More details may emerge at today's House Transportation Committee meeting (below).

Meanwhile, in other Texas Railroad Relocation Fund news, Senator Jeff Wentworth (**San Antonio-San Marcos**) has requested an Attorney General's opinion clarifying whether moving funding for the new Department of Motor Vehicles out of TxDOT constitutes a 'transfer' or an 'appropriation,' another issue surrounding certification of the Fund by the Comptroller. No word yet on how long that might take.

The **Austin-San Antonio** Inter-municipal Rail District launched their new name, "*Lone Star Rail District*" in public forums on Monday 11/9 in **Austin** and in **San Antonio**. Key speakers included Mayors Lee Leffingwell and Julian Castro, Senators Kirk Watson and Jeff Wentworth, and Bexar County Judge Nelson Wolff among others. Check out the new website at www.LoneStarRail.com.

Austin's Capital Metro announced that it is beginning full-go rail testing along its Red Line today, 3-8:30 pm. The runs will simulate real-time conditions and give train engineers additional practice operating the train at night. Trains will be traveling at full operating speeds, nearly twice as fast as freight trains currently move on the route.

The Texas House Committee on Transportation will meet today in **Austin**, Monday, November 16 at 10:00 AM, to receive invited testimony from TxDOT. For more information on the hearing, click [here](#).

Economic Development (and 'Other News')

UT-**San Antonio** has recruited Les Shephard, a top energy and water expert at Sandia National Laboratories, to head up its fledgling Institute for Conventional, Alternative and Renewable Energy. At UTSA, Shephard will have \$5 million over five years to hire professors and get the institute started. This is a crucial hire and the right time. [Story](#).

San Antonio City Manager Sheryl Sculley said that the drought affecting customers of both **San Antonio** Water System (SAWS) and Bexar Metropolitan Water District (BexarMet) has officially ended. SAWS officials attribute the lifting of the water restrictions to a rainy October as well as local efforts to reduce water use.

The Texas Renewable Energy Industry Assoc. (TREIA) awarded **San Antonio** State Representative Mike Villarreal its "State Leadership" Award at its annual conference (11/10). Rep. Villarreal was recognized for his leadership on solar legislation during the 2009 legislative session.

Hays County began Phase II improvements to its Five Mile Dam Park. Total investment in the 43-acre park exceeds \$4 million. The new improvements will include a concession and restroom facility, hike-and-bike trails and other enhancements. Completion is planned for spring of 2010.

Seguin agreed to sell 49 acres of property to a Rector Management for \$1.3 million. Rector intends to combine this parcel with another parcel to create an industrial park to provide businesses or Caterpillar subcontractors with a high-quality location to do business. [Details](#).

Travis County approved a \$40 million bond issuance that will enable a 52-mile water pipeline to be built to transport water to **Manor** from **Caldwell County**. The pipeline will travel through three counties and will deliver 500,000 gallons a day to Manor and be available for other municipalities to buy water from. The pipeline is expected to help spur and support economic development along SH 130.

A Pew Center report, "*Beyond California: States in Fiscal Peril*," found that Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island and Wisconsin are all in fiscal peril, with higher taxes, more government layoffs and deep cuts in services expected. Double-digit budget gaps, rising unemployment, high foreclosure rates and built-in budget constraints are given as the key reasons. The 10 states account for more than one-third of the nation's population and economic output, according to the [report](#).

The *Austin Business Journal* and **Williamson County** will host a 2009 Growth Summit Luncheon on Thursday, December 3 at the Marriott Austin North at Round Rock. This year's summit will focus on booming healthcare and education in **Williamson County**. For information contact ceilers@bizjournals.com or call 512-494-2548.

Thought for the week:

" Love thy neighbor as yourself, but choose your neighborhood."

~ Louise Beal