



## Monday Morning Report

February 8, 2021

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### INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council meets Wednesday, February 17, at 2:00 pm via Zoom video conference. For questions or to add an item to the agenda, contact [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org).

**COVID-19 UPDATE:** The pace of new infections appears to be slowing slightly. As of this morning, confirmed global cases are now 106,227,670, with 2,318,696 deaths (2/8). The US death total is 463,482 with 27,008,565 confirmed cases. (*Johns Hopkins*) Texas was reporting 2,160,098 cases as of yesterday, with 38,643 deaths. **Bexar County:** 2,527 fatalities, with 152,736 confirmed cases; **Guadalupe County:** 9,520 cases with 162 deaths; **Comal County:** 4,422 cases with 239 deaths; **Hays County:** 15,378 cases with 163 deaths; **Travis County:** 71,623 cases with 771 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 33,322 cases with 351 deaths (2/7/21). (*TDHHS*)

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

Nearly three-quarters of the carbon dioxide generated from fossil fuels in the US comes from cities, and scientists have found that those cities are under-counting emissions by an average of 18.3% - though some, like **Cleveland**, are underestimating their air pollution by as much as 90%. This could be significant as the Biden administration rejoins the **Paris** Accord: compliance goals are set nationally but implemented locally. *Story*. The specific **Austin** and **San Antonio** numbers are available *here*.

And related to the item above, testimony before a US Senate energy committee in **Washington** last week indicates that efforts to shift energy sourcing from fossil fuels to wind and solar may not be as beneficial as some might think, largely because the supply chains for producing those non-fossil fuel sources are more energy-intensive and geography-specific. Basically, we may be 'off-shoring' our greenhouse gases production to other countries. *Opinion*.

The COVID-19 pandemic is taking a toll on high-speed rail projects around the globe, reports *BBC News*, citing abandoned or delayed efforts in three US states and **London-Birmingham**, **Leeds-Manchester**, and **Singapore-Kuala Lumpur**. High costs, lower ridership projections, "WBO" - Waiting for a Better Option, like hyper-loop or automated, connected vehicles - are named as the reasons. *Story*.

TxDOT's massive \$7.5 billion IH-45 project in **Houston** got an environmental record-of-decision green light last week from... TxDOT. But local leaders in **Harris County** and **Houston** mayor Sylvester Turner have turned critical about the project, and the process, and are trying to put on the bakes, saying transit investment is a better option. *Story*.

In what is thought to be a nation-wide first, **Austin's** 911 emergency operators will begin offering referrals to mental health services as an option for callers, in addition to the more common police, fire, or medical assistance. The move reflects concerns about a US rash of police shootings involving people with mental health crises. *Story*.

**AllTrails.com**, a fitness-and-travel mobile app used in outdoor recreational activity, created and ranked a list of **San Antonio's** best parks and trails. In all, the app notes 87 trails of varying length and difficulty and adds helpful notes about what to watch for while hiking. [Details](#).

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

The US economy could take a \$14-28 *trillion* hit due to missed reading and math classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, reports **Axios**. The longer kids stay out of the classroom, the higher the cost will rise. Lost earnings over a lifetime based upon lower skills form the core of a study done for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. [Story](#). [Report](#).

Could a post-pandemic return to 'normal' be a threat to cities like **Austin** and **San Antonio**, where housing markets have benefited from the trend toward mobile, highly skilled workers fleeing big cities like **San Francisco** and **New York** for remote work in cheaper, friendlier environments? **The Atlantic** says something called Metcalf's Law may suggest the answer. [Story](#).

Apparently stung by multiple recent media reports of young people moving out of urban centers like his during the pandemic, **New York** mayor Bill de Blasio tweeted "Move over **Austin**," and touted the Big Apple as the greatest city in the world.' Staid, and normally unfunny Gov. Greg Abbott responded: "Dude. Just stop," according to the **San Antonio Express-News**. Mountain, meet molehill. [Story](#).

Texas state fire marshals are investigating an intense, fast-moving, and 'suspicious' fire that destroyed the more-than-a-century-old **Mason County** Courthouse last Thursday night (2/4). "It's like losing a member of the family," said judge Jerry Bearden. Local news reporting [here](#).

Props for Innovation, But Really? The **San Antonio** Zoo made national news last week with a program that allows a \$5 contributor to name a cockroach after an ex-Significant Other for Valentine's Day, and then watch it get eaten by a bird or reptile on live-streamed video. For \$20, former true love gets a frozen rat. No kidding. [Details](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"For myself I am an optimist – it does not seem to be much use being anything else."*

— Sir Winston Churchill

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