



Monday Morning Report

April 26, 2021

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council met last week for a progress report on the Council's "I-10-to-I-10" freight corridor project between **Houston** and South/Central Texas, a briefing on the Biden administration's infrastructure plan for roads and rail, action on an electric vehicle (EV) 'Compact' for the Austin-San Antonio Corridor, and legislative updates on telecommuting, EV policy, and SH 130 bills currently moving through the Legislature in **Austin**. For details, email council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Confirmed global cases will probably top 150 million this week. There were 147,292,930 cases worldwide as of this morning, with 3,111,387 total global deaths. US deaths are at 572,200 with 32,077,935 cases (4/26/21). (**Johns Hopkins**). Texas was reporting 2,456,905 confirmed cases yesterday, with 48,966 deaths, including in **Bexar County:** 178,368 cases with 3,450 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 10,811 cases with 209 deaths; **Comal County:** 5,347 cases with 292 deaths; **Hays County:** 18,061 cases with still 205 deaths; **Travis County:** 81,739 cases with 986 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 38,430 cases still with 461 deaths (4/25). (**TDHHS**).

INFRASTRUCTURE

In **Washington** last week, the Republicans offered their alternative to the Biden administration's infrastructure plan and it is substantially slimmed down from the president's \$2.2 trillion package - totaling about \$600 billion - and more narrowly focused on roads, bridges, rail, airports, and water systems. For an 'apples-to-apples' comparison, go [here](#).

Forget about that hyperloop project between **Washington** and **Baltimore**. After creating a lot of excitement and even announcing station locations as part of the Federal Highway Administration's environmental process, Elon Musk's The Boring Company has apparently scrapped plans for the service that was to eventually stretch from **Washington** to **New York** and **Boston**. That project and another in **Los Angeles** have been dropped from the company's website with no further explanation offered. **Story**.

Brightline West, a commuter passenger rail service operator in Florida, announced a 2021 construction-start date for its proposed **Los Angeles-to-Las Vegas** service, even as Amtrak also indicated last week that it intended to compete on the same route. A Brightline spokesman said they welcomed the competition (doubtful). **Details**.

"The truth is that technology has been developing maybe faster than policy," said US Department of Transportation secretary Pete Buttigieg last week to **Axios**, responding to the government's investigation into 28 crashes involving Tesla vehicles. Following another fatal crash that killed two earlier this month, questions surround the company's 'autopilot' technology. **Story**.

Speaking of Tesla, the **New York Times** reports that although the company had 80% of the US market share for electric vehicles in 2020, more than 100 new electric vehicle competitors will be on the market by 2025 from heavyweight manufacturers like Volkswagen, General Motors, and Ford. Volkswagen alone is spending \$80 billion on developing electric models. **Story**.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

In a disruption that could not come at a worse time - with pandemic-bred cash-rich consumers emerging from lockdown hungry for new models - automakers worldwide are crippled by a shortage of computer microchips vital to fuel injectors, brakes, cruise-controls, and infotainment systems. One manufacturer has been forced to return to analog speedometers as chipmakers devote their supplies to more profitable cellphones and video products. [Story](#).

The **San Antonio** suburb of **Balcones Heights** is considering acquiring 45% ownership for \$5 million of a local retail cornerstone, the 60-year-old Wonderland mall. Sales tax revenue from the mall is vital to the city's \$9 million annual budget, local leaders say. [Details](#).

Travis County commissioners get their first look at a proposed Net Zero Carbon Emissions Implementation Plan tomorrow (4/27) morning at 9:00 am. Watch it live [here](#).

Thought of the Week

"Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."
- Arthur C. Clarke

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