



## Monday Morning Report

May 24, 2021

### INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council's Executive Committee met last week (5/19) to discuss potential joint federal funding solicitations involving programs emerging from recent Biden administration initiatives on infrastructure and jobs, hear reports on a project with the Austin Area Research Organization to increasing networking contacts between **Austin** and **San Antonio** business leaders, receive legislative updates on bills the staff is following and TxETRA's Electric Transportation Act, and hear a brief report on the Great Springs Project. Also under discussion were potential Amtrak expansions and other rail issues. For details, email [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org).

COVID-19 UPDATE: New global cases slowed slightly last week, now 167,229,205 confirmed cases and 3,464,997 total deaths as of today. 1.6 billion doses of vaccine have now been administered. The US has suffered 589,893 deaths with 33,117,923 confirmed cases (5/24). ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Texas was reporting 2,508,607 confirmed cases yesterday and just surpassed 50,000 deaths, at 50,154 fatalities, including in **Bexar County**: 183,218 cases with 3,555 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 11,365 cases with 213 deaths; **Comal County**: 5,752 cases with 298 deaths; **Hays County**: 18,816 cases with 213 deaths (\*data anomaly); **Travis County**: 83,524 cases with 1,018 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 39,584 cases with 475 deaths (5/23/21). ([TDHHS](#)).

### INFRASTRUCTURE

The Biden administration knocked its \$2.2 trillion infrastructure plan back to \$1.7 trillion last week in an effort to demonstrate 'good faith' that they were willing to compromise with Republican lawmakers over the size of the package ([here](#)), but Maine senator Susan Collins said yesterday that there remained 'fundamental' differences with her caucus over what exactly constitutes infrastructure: "This is the test of whether we can work together." [Story](#).

**San Antonio** will be one of the early cities serviced by new a budget airline, Breeze, that launched over this past weekend. So far, travelers from Alamo City can visit **Oklahoma City**, **Tulsa**, and **Bentonville**, but expansion plans are on the horizon. [Story](#). [More](#).

According to reporting in tech journal **Ars Technica** on Saturday (5/21), Texas governor Greg Abbott's office knew five days in advance of the freeze that caused statewide electricity blackouts earlier this year that the root problem was natural gas shortages, but he chose to blame wind power on **Fox News** at the height of the crisis. More potential legal fodder for agencies like CPS Energy in **San Antonio**, which faces more than a billion dollars in losses from the blackouts. [Story](#).

Insights gained during the pandemic - that lower income workers had no other alternative than public transit to access their jobs - have led some transit and government leaders to ask if public transportation should be fully government-funded, much like roads. **Los Angeles**, **Kansas City**, and **Washington** are exploring the idea. [Story](#).

Texas Senator John Cornyn set off fireworks in truck-world last week by proposing - during a Senate Finance Committee hearing in **Washington** - a truck-only, vehicle-miles-traveled tax of 25-cent-per-mile

for truckers - a fee common in Europe. "It's thermonuclear," said one trucking official. Cornyn said trucks do six-times more damage to highways than cars, and that 'money to fix roads has to come from somewhere.' [Story](#).

Thanks to Scott Morris of [Austin](#) for this tip: important preliminary environmental documents will be filed today in the [Federal Register](#) for Capital Metro's Blue and Orange Line transit projects, launching an important 24-month development process under the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investments Program. [Blue](#). [Orange](#).

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Fueled by government subsidies, China's electric vehicle sector has raced ahead of the US, sparking fears that America has fallen dangerously behind its chief economic rival in a crucial future industry, reports [The Atlantic](#), noting that with massive subsidies to microchips, artificial intelligence and cars, China could flood the world with subsidized products in a proxy war between competing political and economic models. [Story](#).

A [San Antonio](#) company is working with NASA to develop landing pads for spacecraft on the moon as part of a push to build a permanent base there. Astroport Space Technologies is designing a furnace to liquefy moon dust into interlocking bricks. 'Think robots doing industrial-scale 3D printing on the moon.' [Story](#).

Similar to [Austin's](#) sizzling housing market, [San Antonio](#) real estate agents are reporting a fever-pitch in sales with rising prices and dwindling inventory, driven according to some accounts, by a California (and other states) exodus of people changing lifestyles in the wake of the pandemic. [Story](#).

In another hopeful sign of a waning pandemic, sales tax revenue in [New Braunfels](#) and [Comal County](#) were up by a whopping 42.3% and 38.8% respectively, year-over-year for March, real dollar increases of about \$1.2 and \$2 million, as closed businesses slowly reopen. [Details](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"Progress is man's ability to complicate simplicity."*  
- Thor Heyerdahl

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