



Monday Morning Report

June 15, 2020

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** Council Executive Committee meets for its regular monthly meeting by Zoom conference *this* Wednesday, June 17, 2:00 pm. RSVP to council@thecorridor.org. [Zoom link](#). Preliminary draft agenda [here](#).

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global cases reached 7,840,408 by 1:33 pm yesterday (6/14), with 431,236 deaths. Over 2 million US residents have been infected and 115,586 US residents have died. ([Johns Hopkins](#)) Texas cases continued to climb at an increasing rate, with 86,011 reported cases and nearly 2000 fatalities. **Bexar County**: 4,393 cases, 84 deaths; **Comal County**: 151 cases, 7 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 165 cases, no reported deaths; **Hays County**: 673 cases, 5 deaths; **Travis County**: 4,461 cases, 104 deaths; **Williamson County**: 820 cases, 30 deaths. ([TDHHS](#))

INFRASTRUCTURE

Despite a lack of evidence that public transportation plays any role in COVID-19 transmission - and, though it seems counter-intuitive, there is none - transit agencies across the US are reporting massive falloffs in ridership, including in **San Antonio** and **Austin**. Much of the ridership decline can be attributed to state or city-imposed quarantines but the notion that transit spreads disease has prompted agencies to launch high-visibility, and costly, cleansing operations and mandated personal protection measures. Yet analysis of 150 infection-clusters in **Paris** and 350 clusters in Austria found *not one* related to transit-usage. [The Atlantic](#) has more [here](#).

Austin's city council and Capital Metro have jointly adopted the \$9.8 billion Project Connect system/vision plan calling for three light rail lines, a new commuter line, and at least seven major improved bus lines. Attention now shifts to governance issues, selection of a starter route, and an upcoming local tax-rate election. [Story](#). [More](#).

In **San Antonio**, meanwhile, VIA Metropolitan Transit leaders seem to be hanging on to hopes for a November tax-rate election that would re-direct revenues from watershed protection toward local transit. Board members were quoted last week questioning a decision by mayor Ron Nirenberg to postpone the election over economic recovery concerns cause by the COVID-19 pandemic. [Story](#).

The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization finally agreed last week on which projects to defer following last month's vote to re-direct \$633 million in local funding to the IH-35 Capital Expressway project in **Austin**. But, once again for the planning group known as CAMPO, it wasn't pretty: a 15-6 vote pitted **Austin** and **Travis County** representatives against more suburban interests. [Story](#). [Analysis](#).

Public safety and water-wastewater officials in the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** - sometimes called "Flash Flood Alley" - might be interested in an invention by **Miami-Dade County**, Florida students: a sensing-and-signaling device that detects clogged storm drains and warns officials of potential flooding in city streets. [Story](#).

Wow. That Vista Ridge water supply project involving a 140-mile pipeline to **San Antonio** from northeast of **Austin** is dumping half of its water flow - some of the most expensive water in Texas - into a creek because of delays and \$80 million in cost overruns on a connective pipeline into the San Antonio Water System's distribution network, according to the **Rivard Report**. Environmentalists call the situation 'appalling.' **Story**.

Considering the ordinarily bureaucratic language of federal pleadings, Union Pacific Railroad's recent comments filed opposing a 'rule of particular applicability' for Texas Central Railway's **Dallas-to-Houston** high-speed rail project seem to be a regulatory Molotov cocktail: TCR's plan contains 'overarching and serious deficiencies' in dealing with 34 existing railroad crossings along the route, says UP. And that's the good news. **Filing**.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Heavy truck-manufacturer Navistar plans to begin building a \$65 million, one million sq. ft. factory in **San Antonio** next month (7/1), enroute to a total \$250 million investment in land and plant equipment that will eventually employ 600 people. Seemingly undeterred by the pandemic and economic concerns that have crippled heavy truck sales recently, the company's planned construction will augment existing facilities in **Springfield**, Ohio. **Details**.

One more unlikely thing to worry about: three-out-of-four US long-haul commercial truck drivers supposedly told an industry-website poll, published in **New York** last week, that they would refuse to make deliveries to cities that cut funding or moved to disband local police forces. Increasingly seen as essential workers in an economy reliant on surging internet-driven sales linked to pandemic quarantines, truckers said their personal safety would be threatened by a reduced police presence in urban areas. **Story**.

The national debate on moving or removing Confederate monuments has found its way to **Caldwell County**, where a memorial erected in 1924 by the Daughters of the Confederacy at the courthouse in **Lockhart** has come into question after a petition drive garnered 7700 signatures. No action has been taken yet, but the public discussion appears both thoughtful and thought-provoking. **Story**.

Unemployment numbers are worse nationally than currently reported. Data issues camouflage numbers for women, African Americans, and immigrants, according to the Pew Research Center. Hispanic women unemployment figures are apparently significantly impacted but are being under-reported. **Report**.

There are signs that the \$100 billion US convention industry is about to re-open - although with some significant new safety and sanitizing measures. **Orlando** is preparing to host a 10,000-person sports tournament next month and the Sunbelt Builders Show will welcome 2300 people to a venue just outside of **Dallas**, also in July. **Details**.

Thought of the Week

"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."

— Theodore Roosevelt

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