



Monday Morning Report

August 2, 2021

INTERNAL

At the July meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee, members heard about progress on a **Bexar-Travis Counties** Compact for electrification of fleet vehicles, legislative updates, workforce impacts of the transition to EV's, federal transportation legislation and potential new revenues for highways and transit, developments on an east/west freight corridor study, a new ride-sharing project with **Austin** & Texas State University, and possible Amtrak service expansions in the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor. For more information, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: As of this morning there are 198,468,882 global confirmed cases, with 4,227,724 deaths. US cases reached 35,004,592, with 613,228 deaths (8/2/21). Over 4 billion vaccine doses have been now administered globally. (*Johns Hopkins*) Yesterday, Texas reported 2,654,872 cases with 52,106 deaths, including **Bexar County**: 195,100 cases with 3,681 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 12,575 cases, with 225 deaths; **Comal County**: 6,924 cases with 320 deaths; **Hays County**: 20,496 cases with 231 deaths; **Travis County**: 89,433 cases with 1,053 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 42,838 cases with 495 deaths (8/1/21). (*TDHHS*).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Most of the climate change-related spending has been removed from the \$550 billion bipartisan infrastructure bill that began moving again last week in **Washington**, although presumably much of it will be put back into the \$3.5 trillion package that Democrats will attempt to pass via the budget reconciliation process. Roads and bridges will get \$110 billion, public transit \$39 billion, and railways \$66 billion. More on what's in or out can be found [here](#). For more on behind-the-scenes negotiations, go [here](#).

Austin will deploy a super-sophisticated Lidar-based traffic monitoring system at a dangerous intersection at Springdale Road and East 7th Street, replacing a current combination of inductive loop detectors, cameras, and radar. The Velodyne system will create real-time 3D maps to help prevent accidents and design infrastructure improvements. [Details](#).

An op-ed in the **New York Times** argues that auto manufacturer Tesla has turned American streets into a public laboratory for the company's self-driving car technologies and points out that Tesla owners aren't the only participants. "We are all Tesla's guinea pigs," writes editorial board member Greg Bensinger. [Opinion](#).

Amazon begins training drivers and testing electric vehicles this week in 16 US cities, including the home of combustion-engine autos, **Detroit**, on-schedule to deploy a 100,000-electric vehicle fleet over the next few years. [Details](#).

As the number of pedestrians on city streets returned to pre-pandemic levels in **San Antonio**, so too did the number of 'dockless vehicles,' sometimes known as e-scooters. Bird, one of the city's two contracted scooter companies recently asked to increase its units, currently set at 1,000, but city staff declined - for now. [Story](#).

When a potential rider calls or texts for service with their bus stop number in **Ellensburg**, WA, the local transit provider texts back with the upcoming arrival times & service connections for all buses coming to that stop. Good idea. [Details](#).

Save The Date: TxDOT will have a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony in **San Antonio** for Segment 1 of the US 281 North Expansion Project at 10:00 am, August 17th. More details forthcoming as they become available.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Recent metrics from the Bureau of Labor Statistics in **Washington** tell a remarkable story: Job openings are at a record high of 9.2 million; for every opening, there's one unemployed American vs. last year, when there were five unemployed people per opening; and new hires are far behind new job openings. In May, the ratio of hires to job openings fell to an all-time low of 0.64%. [Story](#).

Watch for an upcoming Request For Proposals on expansion plans for the **Austin** Convention Center. Officials rolled out various options for a \$1.3 billion expansion of the Center last week (7/21), including one that involves demolition and reconstruction of the existing facility in the second and third phases. [Story](#).

Despite a rainier-than-usual July, firefighters in **Austin** are concerned about - and training for - the potential for wildfires in hotter-and-drier-than-usual predictions for August. Recent rains spur more growth to fuel fires, officials said ([here](#)). More bad news: a new study says Western-states' wildfires will worsen over next 30 years and then - in some places - grow less frequent because of fewer available trees to catch fire. [Story](#).

Under-covered Story: A two-year deal on the legal limit for how much debt the US government can owe lapsed over the weekend (7/31) and **The Hill** says **Washington** is looking at high stakes battle over federal spending 'with dire implications for global financial markets.' Scary implications that need solution by November. [Story](#).

San Antonio has new director of the Economic Development department: Brenda Hicks-Sorensen, formerly in a similar position in **Fort Worth**, took over last week from Alex Lopez. [Details](#) (right-hand column).

These supply-chain problems are getting serious: a global chip shortage is one thing, but less Topo Chico at the height of the summer heat? The **San Antonio Express-News** reports that a glass shortage is leading to fewer bottles of bubbly water (and a laundry list of other consumer products) at area stores. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

*"We live in a society exquisitely dependent on science and technology,
in which hardly anyone knows anything about science and technology."*

- Carl Sagan

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