



Monday Morning Report

August 17, 2020

INTERNAL

No Executive Committee Meeting in August: Due to summer travel schedules by many Committee Members, the August and September meetings will be combined into a single meeting on September 16 at 2:00 pm by video conference. Therefore, there is no August Executive Committee meeting *this week* for the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee. For info, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: As of noon yesterday (8/16), 21,527,747 cases were reported worldwide, with 772,370 deaths. US cases totaled 5,379,914 with nearly 170,000 fatalities. (**Johns Hopkins**) Texas, as of Saturday (8/15) at 3:00 pm was reporting 528,838 total confirmed cases with 9,840 deaths. **Bexar County:** 35,290 cases with 887 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 1,799 cases with 59 deaths; **Comal County:** 2,062 cases with 80 deaths; **Hays County:** 5,111 cases with 46 deaths; **Travis County:** 23,870 cases with 296 deaths; **Williamson County:** 7,330 cases with 103 deaths. There continue to be significant differences between local reporting and official state figures. (**TDHHS**)

Very Big COVID News: The Federal Drug Administration in **Washington** issued an emergency approval over the weekend for a COVID-19 'SalivaDirect' test developed by researchers at the Yale School of Public Health in conjunction with the National Basketball Association. Approximately 90 tests based upon saliva can be processed in three hours by big labs, said officials. **Details. More.**

INFRASTRUCTURE

Highway infrastructure investments are a pathway to economic recovery in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, argue **Austin** and **San Antonio** officials with the Transportation Advocates of Texas, in a series of opinion editorials being published across the state. They urged lawmakers to 'recognize that an uninterrupted, robust program of priority highway improvements is essential.' **Opinion.**

Austin's city council gave the go-ahead last week to two important transportation ballot initiatives for the November 3 elections: voter approval of the \$7.1 billion Project Connect light rail and transit plan funded through an 8.75-cent property tax rate increase; and a \$460 million 'active' transportation proposition for streets, sidewalks, and bike lanes. **Story.**

Global governments have approved deep seabed mining operations for 500,000 square miles of the ocean floor, roughly twice the size of Texas, with potentially catastrophic consequences for marine life, say two experts in the **New York Times**. A single mining ship can discharge 2-3.5 million cubic feet of effluent each day (equivalent to a fleet of tanker trucks 15-miles long) with lethal impacts for eco-systems throughout the water column. Scary. **Opinion.**

Highway lanes dedicated to self-driving, autonomous vehicles are being planned for a 40-mile corridor between **Detroit** and **Ann Arbor** in Michigan. A joint venture with public and private sector partners is designing the lanes for testing various technologies that may be employed in the future. Interestingly, they will be used to connect economic 'Opportunity Zones.' **Details.**

What lawsuits, opposition from cities and counties, and a major slurry spill into an aquifer couldn't accomplish, singers Paul Simon and Willie Nelson did with a single letter: Kinder Morgan announced last week that they would re-route their Permian Highway pipeline through **Blanco County** after complaints from the two tune-smiths. (insert clever song title *here*) [Details](#).

Two new flyover ramps were set to open last week on US 281 and Loop 1604 on the north side of **San Antonio**. The ramps connect the southbound lanes of US 281 to the east and westbound lanes of 1604, saving drivers over 600,000 hours of traffic delay each year, according to TxDOT. [Details](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Already home to more than 80 companies, nonprofits and military agencies employing 14,000 people, Port **San Antonio** is moving forward with a \$60 million 'innovation center' officials hope will become a magnet for cyber-security and technology companies. The port's board last week approved funding for a 130,000 sq. ft. facility, which will include a 24-hour e-gaming stadium and a 2500-person arena. [Story](#).

A four-year, \$154 million proposal to employ 40,000 people through workforce development projects - funded by a 1/8-cent sales tax redirected from aquifer protection programs - will be on **San Antonio's** Nov. 3 election ballot, following action by the city council last week. Approximately 154,000 local residents have lost jobs during the pandemic, economic development officials said. [Story](#).

As trade (and other) conflicts between the US and China accelerate, the Mexican government has launched a campaign to convince companies to reconsider their far-flung supply chains and move more manufacturing facilities to Mexico. A story datelined out of **Mexico City** says President Lopez Obrador believes increasing exports is the best way out of increasing economic doldrums (a 10.5% GDP decline this year). [Details](#).

Although there will be no 2020 Formula One event this year, the Circuit of the Americas in **Austin** received nearly \$27 million from the state of Texas last month for their 2019 race expenses, which included a 'massive' rights fee estimated at \$30 million just to stage the race. The track has collected nearly \$200 million from Texas since 2012. [Details](#).

There were plenty of flags, plenty of people, and plenty of tears Saturday (8/15) as **New Braunfels** welcomed home native son Marine Lance Corporal Guillermo 'Willie' Perez, one of eight soldiers killed last month in a **San Diego** training accident. You can see a photo slideshow of the day's events [here](#).

Thought of the Week

"Never let yesterday use up too much of today."

— Will Rogers

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