



Monday Morning Report

Labor Day Edition

September 3, 2019

INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, September 18, 2:00 pm at the Council offices in **San Marcos**, 304 N CM Allen Parkway. Please RSVP to council@thecorridor.org.

INFRASTRUCTURE

More reaction is emerging on that request from 20 bi-partisan legislators to the Texas House Transportation Committee chairman for an interim study on commuter rail between **Austin** and **San Antonio**. Chairman Terry Canales (D-**Edinburg**) said he had received many such requests and said "I believe that passenger rail between two of our biggest cities in Texas is an issue [the] Committee should look at in the interim" between legislative sessions. **San Antonio** mayor Ron Nirenberg said: "It has been a priority of this community for almost three decades." [Story](#).

At their meeting last week (8/29) in **Austin** the Texas Transportation Commission approved \$77 billion in projects for the 10-year Unified Transportation Plan. \$28 billion will target congestion in the state's five major metropolitan areas, \$4.6 billion is set aside for safety projects, and \$600 million goes to the Permian Basin to address issues related to petroleum production. The **Austin area** and **San Antonio** are each earmarked for about \$1 billion in funding. [Story](#). [More](#).

Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority officials in **Seguin** say they have plans for repairing their 90-year old hydro-electric dams and restoring water to six lakes currently being drained in its Guadalupe River valley system - they just don't yet have the \$180 million required. The basic dam structures are sound, but the gate mechanisms need to be replaced with modern designs. State and local funding partners are being sought. [Story](#).

Governor Greg Abbott has appointed Robert C. 'Robie' Vaughn of **Dallas** to the Texas Transportation Commission for a term that will expire in 2025. Vaughn is the owner of Vaughn Capital Partners and Vaughn Petroleum, in addition serving on a number of advisory boards and educational councils. [Details](#).

Here's a handy list of the most congested roads in Texas in 2018, courtesy of the Texas A&M Transportation Institute, and highways in both **Austin** (#3 for IH-35 at US 290) and **San Antonio** (#15 for McAllister Freeway at US 281) ranked in the Top 20. [Details](#). [Analysis](#).

Rail activists in **Austin** are circulating an interesting article from the scholarly, left-leaning journal **Dissent** that traces a decades-long influence campaign by oil companies and highway construction interests to guide public policy toward petroleum-powered Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects rather than electrified light rail. This comes within the context of upcoming rail-versus-BRT decisions by both Capital Metro and VIA Metropolitan Transit in **San Antonio**. It's long and somewhat convoluted, but read it [here](#).

Capital Metro has launched its own ride-sharing application that takes multiple people in **Austin** heading in the same direction and books them into a shared vehicle. The cost is \$1.25 per trip and you can see how the process works by going [here](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and 'Other' News)

Bexar County commissioner Justin Rodriguez is pushing for an official advisory committee of stakeholders to upgrade local voting equipment and procedures, add more flexibility in polling places, and drive higher voter turnout ahead of the 2020 elections. [Story](#).

Opportunity Zones, the hottest new urban investment program in years dedicated to developing poorer neighborhoods, are being widely misused as tax avoidance schemes for wealthy investors who target richer neighborhoods and projects that don't really need federal help, according to an in-depth report in the **New York Times**. At least one Texas project, in **Houston**, is highlighted as an example. [Details](#).

The **Washington Post** reports that **Austin** has become a flash point in the national debate over whether homeless residents have a constitutional right to sleep on public streets, and that the city's response to homelessness is causing some voters to reconsider their party affiliation. [Story](#). The city's response is also creating friction between the local police union and political leaders. [More](#). [Still More](#).

State and federal authorities are still seeking the computer hackers who hit nearly two dozen Texas jurisdictions with coordinated ransomware attacks last month, but the variety of responses by local officials reveals a lot about just how prepared some entities are for cyber security issues. **Lubbock County** has been singled out for their rapid response. The attacks also highlight state agencies that local officials can turn to for help: The Department of Information Resources and their Network Security Operations Center. [Story](#). [More](#).

San Antonio's first female mayor, Lila Cockrell, died last week at 97. She served four terms as mayor beginning in 1975 and really ushered in the modern era of Alamo City municipal government. Memorials and tributes begin *this* evening with a funeral scheduled for Thursday (9/5). Some are suggesting placing a statue of her downtown. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"Find something you love to do, and you'll never have to work a day in your life."

- Harvey Mackay

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