



Monday Morning Report

September 7, 2021

Labor Day Edition

INTERNAL

The next scheduled meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is Wednesday, September 15th at 2:00 pm by videoconference. For questions or contributions, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: As of today, confirmed global cases have surpassed 220 million, with 4.5 million deaths; 5.5 billion vaccine doses have been administered. US cases have reached 40 million with 650,000 deaths (9/7/21). ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Yesterday, Texas reported 3,101,054 cases with 57,110 deaths, including **Bexar County**: 236,426 cases with 4,173 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 15,251 cases, with 259 deaths; **Comal County**: 9,181 cases with 378 deaths; **Hays County**: 25,823 cases with 274 deaths; **Travis County**: 105,988 cases with 1,183 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 54,620 cases with 560 deaths (9/6/21). ([TDHHS](#)).

INFRASTRUCTURE

The *American-Statesman* reports that opposition is building in **Austin** among city council members and environmental groups against TxDOT's plans for rebuilding IH-35 through downtown. Broadly backed by the local business community, the Central Expressway project's opponents are demanding the roadway be 'no wider, no higher,' and object to economic dislocations in nearby neighborhoods. [Story. More.](#)

While it may surprise some commuters stuck in traffic on area freeways, **San Antonio** has been ranked 24th out of 100-cities in the nation studied by [WalletHub](#) for the best driving conditions. **Austin** ranked 10th. The study analyzed four categories: traffic & infrastructure; safety; operational costs and access to maintenance. [Story.](#)

The head of Mexico's Regulatory Agency for Rail Transport announced last week the launch of a \$2 million feasibility study of a proposed passenger rail service between **Monterrey** and **San Antonio**, an idea that has been kicked around for decades without much progress. The study, to be completed by the end of the year, will gauge ridership demand and prospective costs. [Story.](#)

After years of claiming that no government money would be used for their **Dallas - Houston** high speed rail project, Texas Central Railroad is now saying that a federal loan via the Biden administration's \$3.5 trillion infrastructure package will be required, possibly for as much as \$12 billion. [Story.](#)

For the second time in two years the Federal Railroad Administration has paused its studies of that proposed maglev high speed train project between **Washington** and **Baltimore**, this time 'to review project elements and determine next steps.' An analysis of a tunnel project on the route was abandoned earlier this year. [Story.](#)

Hurricane Ida may have luckily missed Texas, but it has renewed interest in the \$26.5 billion 'Ike Dike' project that would protect **Houston-Galveston** from storm surges by extending a seawall, add levies and

pumps, and build sea-gates to shut off local bays and ship channels from the Gulf of Mexico. A project progress update [here](#).

TxDOT is closing portions of IH-10 in **Boerne** for six weeks to accommodate some bridge construction in the area that will limit east/west traffic and the access lanes. Closures begin Sept. 12, and the project should be completed in early 2022. [Details](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

San Antonio has hired Louisiana-native Mike Ramsey to head up its new voter-approved \$200 million Ready to Work initiative for local workforce development, one of the largest worker training programs undertaken anywhere in the US. Ramsey has a big challenge considering an earlier, similar \$65 million city-funded Train for Jobs effort created far less than the 10,000 jobs initially promised; the new director is being cautious about projections for this effort, although officials have said they expect 37,500 new jobs out of the project over four years. [Story](#).

Morgan Stanley predicts exploring the commercial aspects of outer space could become a \$1 trillion enterprise by 2040 and federal agencies say 50,000 new satellites could be orbiting the earth within the next ten years, with ample opportunities for **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** companies. **Axios** has done a 'deep dive' on the space industry ([here](#)) and created a short video course about commercial trends shaping the future of space. [Video](#).

Samsung Electronics has apparently chosen **Taylor**, in **Williamson County**, as the location for its new \$17 billion, 51.7 million sq.ft. chip factory - citing the need for a reliable power supply as the main reason for the choice of location - according to today's Korean newspapers. The new factory will be four times larger than the company's existing **Austin** site. [Details](#).

US home buyers seem unconcerned about climate change, according to **CNBC** and the head of real estate consulting firm Redfin. Despite recent widespread fires, floods, and hurricanes the markets in 'at-risk' cities are booming. "The most affordable places are the places most at risk of being affected by climate change," an executive said: "The buyers just keep marching into the jaws of destruction." [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"Everyone complains about the weather, but nobody ever seems to do anything about it."

- Willard Scott

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