



Monday Morning Report

September 27, 2021

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled to meet by video conference Wednesday, October 20 at 2 PM. For information, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: As of this morning the confirmed global case count is 231,913,317, with 4,749,880 deaths. US cases are at 42,932,211 with 688,041 deaths (9/27/21). (*Johns Hopkins*). The **Dallas Morning News** says ([here](#)) the Texas case count has surpassed 4 million but officially yesterday, state reported 3,342,535 cases with 62,942 deaths, including **Bexar County:** 253,615 cases with 4,635 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 16,563 cases, with 291 deaths; **Comal County:** 10,399 cases with 414 deaths; **Hays County:** 28,175 cases with 304 deaths; **Travis County:** 114,060 cases with 1,322 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 60,712 cases with 621 deaths (9/26/21). (*TDHHS*).

INFRASTRUCTURE

This should be a big week in **Washington** for infrastructure funding, with both the \$1.2 trillion bipartisan measure and the Biden administration's massive \$3.5 trillion package in active play. Big city mayors are pushing hard for the Biden plan (400 mayors endorsed it this summer) and expectations are high - **Austin's** Project Connect is touted as a beneficiary - but House progressives threaten to kill the smaller bill if the large one isn't passed first. *Story. More.*

TxDOT brought its plans for the expansion of IH-35 through downtown **Austin** - the Capital Expressway Project - to the **Travis County** commissioners court last week, revealing that it narrowed the number of options under consideration from three to two and addressing concerns about the climate impacts of the project on air quality. District engineer Tucker Ferguson pointed out that moving cars create less air pollution than jammed traffic. *Story.*

"We were promised self-driving cars," says *Vice* magazine, asking now, "Where are they?" Delayed, possibly for many years to come, they report, citing technical challenges that grow more complex even as researchers strive to resolve them. The magazine surveys the state-of-play in the field, pans Elon Musk's boasts, and concludes that the safety risks of autonomous technologies make widespread release a regulatory matter. *Story.*

Supply chain issues continue to upset international trade and production lines, creating shortages of everything from Topo Chico soda water to sophisticated computer chips for automobiles, and now *The Atlantic* surveys the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and reveals how interconnected the US is to the rest of the world, even though most of us don't realize it. Worth reading. *Story.*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

With Tesla leading the way, **Austin** is gearing up as a key electric vehicle (EV) hub says the *American-Statesman* in a survey piece covering EV activity, usage, and start-ups in the region, with mentions of businesses in **Cedar Park**, **Liberty Hill**, Southeast **Travis County**, and more. *Story.*

The rapid adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) by worldwide consumers is predicted to cause big displacements in the jobs market (with internal combustion engines going the way of buggy whips, who needs mechanics?), but the **New York Times** reports on a think-tank study that shows how EV's can *create* more jobs, rather than eliminate them. But the secret sauce of success, the report says, is subsidies and new workforce development efforts. [Study](#).

The highly respected professional national news service **Axios** has launched a local daily online edition today, **Axios Austin**, which broke a big behind-the-scenes story this morning about COVID masking at the University of Texas and gubernatorial politics. Sign up for the newsletter [here](#).

Last week, the *Wall Street Journal* presented the "Future of Transportation." It featured speakers on the topics of air travel, autonomous vehicles, and the commercialization of space. [Air Travel](#). [Autonomous Space](#).

People On the Move: **New Braunfels** is looking for a new fire chief to replace Patrick O'Connell, who suddenly retired last week after 28 years of service. [Details](#). And **Austin** city manager Spencer Cronk has tapped interim police chief Joseph Chacon to assume the job permanently, subject to city council approval. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"Intelligence is the ability to adapt to change."

- Stephen Hawking

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