



## Monday Morning Report

October 4, 2021

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### 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](mailto:council@thecorridor.org).

**COVID-19 UPDATE:** The US death count now tops 701,178, with 43,683,764 confirmed cases as of this morning. The confirmed global case count is just under 235 million, with 4,803,300 deaths. (10/4/21) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). The Texas case count yesterday stood at 3,394,815 with 64,732 deaths, including **Bexar County:** 257,091 cases with 4,769 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 16,882 cases, with 302 deaths; **Comal County:** 10,670 cases with 426 deaths; **Hays County:** 28,600 cases with 314 deaths; **Travis County:** 115,667 cases with 1,349 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 61,976 cases with 635 deaths (10/3/21). ([TDHHS](#)).

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

Bloomberg's **CityLab** newsletter takes a detailed look at TxDOT's Interstate 35 rebuilding plan for downtown **Austin** and concludes that - over time - it won't reduce congestion, but will increase it, due to induced demand and 'the iron law of congestion.' Agree or not, but it's a pretty serious historical assessment of similar projects dating back to the 1920's. Other than more public transit, they don't propose another alternative. [Opinion](#).

Major cities worldwide are making the change to electrified transportation, away from internal combustion engines, for everything from public transit trams to garbage trucks to North Sea car ferries. The transition comes as European cities strive to halve carbon emissions by 2030, the **New York Times** reports, with examples from **Berlin**, **Bogota**, and **Bergen**, Norway. For now, with a big head start, China provides lots of the vehicles. [Story](#).

Back in the US, five Midwest governors are joining forces to build a new network for charging electric vehicles to reduce toxic emissions from cars and trucks. Dubbed REV Midwest (the Regional Electric Vehicle Midwest Coalition), the bipartisan effort - designed to attract federal and private funding due to its scale - includes Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois thus far. [Story](#).

There will be a groundbreaking ceremony for the IH-35 NEX project *next* Thursday, October 14, 10:00 am at 13283 S I-35 Frontage Road in **Live Oak**. The 9.5-mile project spans eight cities in **Bexar**, **Comal**, and **Guadalupe Counties** from I-410 to FM 3009. [Details](#). [Register](#).

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### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Rolling electricity blackouts in such major cities as **Shanghai** and **Beijing** are raising questions about the long-term sustainability of China's power grid. Some of the cutbacks are policy-driven, reflecting regional attempts to comply with national greenhouse gas emissions, but others reflect supply issues with natural gas and coal, reports say, hitting businesses and manufacturers hard. More worries for the global supply chain. [Story](#).

England, too, is suffering from a supply shortage, this time of gasoline caused by a manpower gap, namely 100,000 fewer truck drivers to deliver fuel to parts of the country. Maddening post-Brexit rules, dwindling benefits, and deteriorating roadside conditions have led drivers to flee the workforce. A story datelined out of **London** says the military has been brought into man private delivery trucks. [Story](#).

Autonomous trucking supplier Aurora says it will partner with Fed Ex to begin testing driver-less truck deliveries on the 250-mile route between **Dallas** and **Houston** along Interstate 45, although until 2023 the deliveries will be accompanied by a safety driver. Also mentioned, Lyft has promised autonomous ride-hailing as an option in **Austin** by later this year. Article surveys state-of-play for autonomous deployment in Texas. [Story](#).

This Wednesday, October 6, join **Axios** news service for a virtual event on the future of autonomous vehicles in shaping transportation, labor and the economy. Experts and legislators discuss how the AV industry is preparing for commercial deployment with trucks, tractors, and cars, expanding accessibility and impacting the critical movement of goods. [Details](#).

Despite pandemic-related setbacks **San Antonio** continues to see increasing business travel, as reflected by recent numbers from Southwest Airlines and the city's convention and tourism officials. "The worst is behind us," said one. "We're going to chop those two years out of our history and get back on track." [Story](#).

No one seems sure just why, but billionaire **New York** investor and philanthropist George Soros rocked local politics by dropping a \$500,000 contribution into a campaign to defeat a ballot item that would force **Austin** to add more members to its police force. Soros' son has also contributed to local elections before. [Story](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree."*

- Martin Luther

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