



Monday Morning Report

October 25, 2021

INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee will be Wednesday, November 17, at 2:00 pm by Zoom videoconference. There will be a presentation by Jason Giulietti, president of the Greater San Marcos Partnership. To add an item to the agenda or for any questions, email council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: The confirmed global case count this morning is at 243,747,953, with 4,950,232 deaths. US cases are at just under 45.5 million, with 735,941 deaths (10/25/21) (*Johns Hopkins*). The Texas case count yesterday was 3,490,573 with 69,072 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 263,098 cases with 5,070 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 17,565 cases, with 333 deaths; **Comal County**: 11,130 cases with 444 deaths; **Hays County**: 29,420 cases with 333 deaths; **Travis County**: 118,951 cases with 1,413 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 64,700 cases with 682 deaths (10/24/21). (*TDHHS*).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Yet another national publication takes a critical look at TxDOT's plan for rebuilding IH-35 through downtown **Austin** and finds it 'inconsistent' with the state capital's progressive image. *Slate* magazine says most local city council members oppose the design, which it calls 'neighborhood-eating,' but points out that ultimately statewide traffic demands must be met. Interesting historical data included on the accuracy of TxDOT traffic projections. *Story*.

North Texas transportation policy boards continue to examine various options for high-capacity transit between **Dallas** and **Fort Worth**, but their local choice of technology may influence how transit connections develop for the rest of Texas. Current front runners appear to be high speed rail, which has been safely operating worldwide for decades, or a mythical hyperloop system, the 'unicorn' of transit planners. *Story*.

Hats off to the **San Antonio Express-News** for an impressive package earlier this month examining the growth of rock quarries along IH-35 from **Garden Ridge** to **New Braunfels** - and documenting the rise in citizen opposition to their expansion. Datelined from **Comal County**, the piece considers political & environmental effects of 'Quarry Row,' a 30-mile stretch of 11 rock-extraction plants increasingly impacting neighborhoods. *Story*.

Formula One racing at the Circuit of the Americas track near **Austin** came and went this weekend, marked by big crowds and a lot of celebrity-spotting by fawning local media, but a **Fort Worth** journalist is asking some tough questions about how much the event is really worth to Texans. The state is on the hook again this year for a \$25 million payment to the sponsors (\$250 million in annual state payments since its founding), not to mention a reported earlier \$200 million plus investment from the Texas Teacher Retirement System. *Opinion*.

The city council in fast-growing **Hays County** town of **Dripping Springs** has adopted a Master Transportation Plan that includes a new roadway between RM 12 and US 290, new north/south

connections within the city, and construction of bypass routes around the city to the east and west. [Details](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

The 2020 Census Bureau population count, usually a dull numbers game made more volatile last year by partisan politics, is sparking some second-guessing by demographers noting inconsistencies in local results. In **San Antonio**, the count may have been off by over 100,000 ([here](#)) and **Dallas** officials believe their numbers may also have been under-counted. [Story](#).

Texas economic development stakeholders - including **Austin** and **San Antonio** officials - have formed a task force dedicated to making the state home to the National Semiconductor Technology Center and the National Advanced Packaging Manufacturing Program, both big federal initiatives directed at making the US more competitive and resolving supply chain issues. [Details](#) (right hand column).

Toyota, which already has a significant manufacturing presence in **San Antonio**, has announced plans to build a new \$1.29 billion, 1,750-employee factory somewhere in the US to make batteries for gas-electric and fully electric vehicles. The plant is part of \$3.4 billion that Toyota plans to spend in the US making automotive batteries in the next 10 years. [Story](#).

More details are emerging about that proposed \$2 billion makeover of **San Antonio** International Airport and the plans, according to the local newspaper headlines, are "big, bold, and badly-needed." The 20-year plan, set for city council approval later this month, calls for new terminals, parking lots, and runways. [Opinion](#).

Speaking of air travel (above), **Axios** is reporting that those Southwest Airlines cancellations earlier this month cost the **Dallas**-based air carrier \$75 million and were sparked - not, as reported, by pilot no-shows based upon Covid-vaccination requirements - but by bad weather and outdated workforce scheduling software. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"The smallest deed is better than the greatest intention."

- John Burroughs

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