



Monday Morning Report

November 23, 2020

INTERNAL

At last week's Executive Committee meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council (11/18), members received presentations on **Austin's** partnership with Ford Motor Company to develop next-generation electric and self-driving vehicles and another on Capital Metro's current ridership issues and next steps on Project Connect planning. The Committee also voted to participate in the statewide Texas Electric Transportation Resources Alliance (co-chaired by **Travis County** commissioner Brigid Shea and **Bexar County** commissioner Justin Rodriguez). For more information on the Alliance, go [here](#).

COVID-19 UPDATE: As of this morning (11/23), there are about 59 million reported cases of infection worldwide with nearly 1.4 million deaths. The US is reporting over 12 million infections, with 256,800 deaths. ([Johns Hopkins](#)) Yesterday (11/22), Texas was reporting 1,094,275 cases with 20,556 deaths, including in **Bexar County:** 60,727 cases with 1,476 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 4,145 cases with 83 deaths; **Comal County:** 3,125 cases with 113 deaths; **Hays County:** 6,960 cases with 78 deaths; **Travis County:** 36,175 cases with 467 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 11,559 cases with 164 deaths. ([TDHHS](#))

COVID-19 Hospitalizations Status: Federal officials report that about 1000 US hospitals will face critical staffing shortages this week, but the metrics for most of Texas are less dire ([here](#)). Analyst Bill King's hospitalization statewide report can be found [here](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Comparing today's economic situation in the Mid-West to the post-World War II recovery period in Europe in this morning's **Washington Post**, eight mayors from four states are calling on the incoming Biden administration to create a Marshall Plan for Middle America to address a 'crisis' in aging infrastructure, obsolete business and government institutions, and the need for workforce development. [Opinion](#).

Hope springs eternal: **The Wall Street Journal** reports that even with a likely divided government convening in **Washington** next January, both Democrats and Republicans are eyeing one arena where there is a strong possibility of compromise (because both parties have recognized the unmet needs for years now): infrastructure spending to rebuild roads, rails, ports, and airports. [Details](#).

A long-forgotten and abandoned former Union Pacific rail line in South **Austin**, the so-called Bergstrom Spur, is finally getting a moment in the sun: the city aired plans at a virtual public hearing this summer to acquire and develop the line first as a trail, then eventually as a potential transit corridor (possibly to the airport) linked to Project Connect. [Details](#).

The **Austonia** newsletter examines the passage of the \$7.1 billion Project Connect in **Austin** earlier this month and concludes that a once-in-a-lifetime combination of voter turnout, a younger electorate, and a new approach to transit planning resulted in a 19% margin favorable to the ballot initiative - after two earlier efforts had failed. [Story](#).

In an update to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,' Robert Rivard adds 'a more walkable **San Antonio**' is the right of every citizen in this weekend's **San Antonio Report**, commenting on recent news that the Pearl development is subtracting parking space to create more green space and a safer pedestrian environment. [Opinion](#).

The **San Antonio** River Authority wants you to know about a new Inaugural Report they've launched, expected to become an annual exercise, that rates the quality and threats to creeks and rivers in the **San Antonio** River Basin. Experts, scientists, and technical staff used 12 specific indicators to develop metrics that gauge the health of the system. [Details](#). [The Report Card](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Bloomberg News is reporting that a perfect storm is hitting ports from **Los Angeles** to **New York** and throughout the globe, threatening to upset supply chains that fuel the economy: 'Labor and equipment shortages are colliding with the still-healthy purchasing power of US consumers - all complicated by the pandemic, and truckers are struggling to keep up with a record wave of imports.' [Story](#).

With few changes in the political makeup of the Texas Legislature following the Nov. 3 elections, cities and counties can once again expect to have their authority threatened when lawmakers return to **Austin** in January. The past two sessions featured attempts to restrict local governments' action on annexation and property taxes; this time, Senate State Affairs leadership wants to limit their ability to hire legislative lobbyists. [Story](#).

San Antonio has made the short list of just six cities as the potential site for the new US Space Command, possibly leading to 1400 well-paid jobs and a lot of private sector development opportunities. **Dallas** and **Fort Worth**, two other Texas cities under consideration, were eliminated as were 50 additional potential sites. City leaders make a strong case for the project [here](#).

Google is working with **Los Angeles** and the Tree Canopy Lab to create a new tool that will allow hundreds of cities to map where there are gaps in the urban tree canopy and plant new trees to limit the effects of increased global warming, particularly the 'heat island' effect of urban concrete. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well."

— Voltaire

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