



Monday Morning Report

November 29, 2021

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee met Wednesday, November 17 by video conference for a presentation on the economic development efforts of the Greater **San Marcos** Partnership, a report on potential regional implications of the COP26 climate conference in **Glasgow**, updates on **Austin-San Antonio** civic networking, TxETRA progress, federal infrastructure spending, new bus proposals between **Austin-San Antonio**, and 2022 projects and goals. For more information, query council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Worldwide cases surpassed 261 million as of this morning, with 5,203,155 fatalities. US cases have reached 48,235,081, with 776,651 deaths (11/29/21) (**Johns Hopkins**). Prior to the Thanksgiving holiday, Texas was reporting 3,572,590 confirmed cases with 72,381 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 267,666 cases with 5,263 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 17,915 cases, with 344 deaths; **Comal County**: 11,600 cases with 465 deaths; **Hays County**: 30,314 cases with 354 deaths; **Travis County**: 122,029 cases with 1,465 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 66,919 cases with 722 deaths (11/24/21). (**TDHHS**).

INFRASTRUCTURE

With the prospects of the Biden administration's \$1.2 trillion infrastructure spending on the horizon, the **New York Times** surveyed two decades worth of big US highway, bridge, and rail projects to conclude: "Cost overruns, engineering challenges, and political obstacles have made it all but impossible to complete a major, multibillion-dollar infrastructure project in the United States on budget and on schedule." **Story**.

There's good news/bad news on efforts to build a high-speed rail connection between **Monterrey** and **San Antonio** along an existing freight rail line. The state government in Nuevo Leon confirmed last week that it would proceed with the project, but a related feasibility study has already doubled in cost and is delayed until 2022. **Story**.

A leading conservative voice on transportation policy says that Maryland is taking the right approach on building new tolled highway lanes and compares delivery mechanisms for about a dozen US roadway expansion projects. Robert Poole, a private-sector advocate for the Reason Foundation in **Washington**, shrugs off public risk. **Opinion**.

Advocates for self-driving autonomous vehicles frequently quote the statistic that 94% of car crashes are the result of human error, **The Atlantic** reports, but the figure is misleading at best and most probably a myth that ignores larger issues of design flaws in roadways and automobiles - thus confusing causes and effects. **Opinion**.

Readers responding to a story about a US truck driver shortage in the **New York Times** had a laundry list of solutions last week, including self-driving trucks, lowering age limits for drivers, importing workers from Mexico, higher wages, and removing hourly operating restrictions, among others (**here**). And the **Washington Post** knocks down five myths about problems in the supply chain (no, self-driving trucks won't solve the problem). **Opinion**.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Austin is on track to become the least affordable major metro city for home buyers in the US by the end of the year - and has already surpassed hot markets **Boston**, **Miami**, and **New York** - according to this weekend's **New York Times**. The story traces what's driving housing prices in the Texas capital. In response, the local city council has called a special meeting to address the issue for tomorrow (11/30) at 10:00 am. [Story](#). Meeting [Livestream](#).

Samsung Makes It Official: Confirming what South Korean newspapers have been reporting for months, Samsung announced that it will build a \$17 billion, 6 million square-foot chip making factory in **Taylor**, just northeast of **Austin** in **Williamson County**. The plant will create 1800 jobs, officials said. [Story](#). [More](#).

Opposition to rock quarries near **New Braunfels** and **Comal County** continues to grow, both in the courts and in public forums. A series of regulatory rulings from state environmental agencies have been challenged by local groups, and negative air quality and water impacts are being questioned. [Story](#).

Before winter storm Uri in February, one **San Antonio** electric utility's gas bill was \$540,000. After Uri, it was \$22 million. And now ratepayers are expected to pay the difference with monthly surcharges for possibly the next eight years. **San Antonio Report** has some excellent journalism on the issues involved [here](#). [More](#).

Elon Musk Watch: We get that **Austin** and the Rocket Man are becoming synonymous, as the **Dallas Morning News** reports in an article about how locals must now adjust to having the world's richest man as a neighbor ([here](#)). But Elon Musk, Russian hero? A report out of **Moscow** says the new Austinite has become iconic for memes, merchandise, and Mars. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone."

- Pablo Picasso

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