



## Monday Morning Report

December 13, 2021

### INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee will be Wednesday, January 19th, at 2:00 pm via Zoom video conference. Chairman John Thomaides decided to merge the December and January meetings to more efficiently utilize members' time in this busy season - thus no meeting this week. And **Happy Holidays!**

**COVID-19 UPDATE:** Global cases topped 270 million as of this morning, with 5,308,651 fatalities. US cases will exceed 50 million this week, with 800,000 deaths - *one out of every 100 of elder Americans (here)*. (12/13/21) (**Johns Hopkins**). Texas was reporting 3,626,237 confirmed cases yesterday with 73,400 deaths, including in **Bexar County:** 271,910 cases with 5,299 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 18,123 cases, with 349 deaths; **Comal County:** 11,843 cases, still with 468 deaths; **Hays County:** 30,742 cases with 359 deaths; **Travis County:** 123,689 cases with 1,486 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 68,057 cases with 735 deaths (12/12/21). (**TDHHS**).

### INFRASTRUCTURE

Yet another new study reports that Interstate 35 is one of the most dangerous US highway routes. This time it's **Austin**-based Zebra, an auto insurance firm, which used 2019 traffic accident data and found that I-35 ranked fifth out of the top ten dangerous roadways studied, with nearly 200 fatalities that year - 12.56 deaths per 100 miles. I-20, which runs from West Texas to South Carolina, and I-95, from Maine to Florida, led the list. **Story. More.**

The newsletter **Austonia** recaps recent population growth between **Austin** and **San Antonio**, reaching the unsurprising conclusion that the two metro-areas are growing together into an urban complex that will soon rival **Dallas-Fort Worth** in size and scale. An urban expert is quoted as saying a rail connection between the two cities is needed to maximize economic potential. Great idea. Wish we'd thought of that. **Story.**

The **Washington Post** reports that transportation problems can be a leading cause for students failing to complete their college educations. They cite four reasons: costs; lack of accessibility; available routes and frequencies of transit don't sync well with college schedules; and unreliable transit travel times. Disproportionately affected: low-income and minority students. Colleges nationwide are starting to respond with various solutions. **Story.**

If you're a bit confused by the flurry of activity surrounding the Project Connect transit program (Red, Blue, Orange, Green and maybe Gold Lines) you should tune in *this* Wednesday (12/15) at 2:00 pm to the **Austin** Transit Partnership for a Project Connect Roadmap presentation laying out the path forward. **Livestream.**

**Dripping Springs**, the **Hays County** town that recently imposed a building permits moratorium in response to rapid growth in the area (city population has tripled since 2010), is finding out that pausing development to study long term infrastructure needs is not as easy as it sounds. 'Be careful what you ask for,' says the mayor. **Story.**

**Travis County** is moving aggressively to protect the area around Hamilton Pool, west of **Austin**, by buying up 3000 acres of land near the iconic preserve last week to keep it from being developed. According to the *Houston Chronicle*, most local residents approve. [Story](#). [Map](#).

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Despite the spate of recent national stories about **Austin's** red-hot real estate market, the website *Realtor.com* says the **San Antonio-New Braunfels** market is the one to watch for the highest percentage gains in the future. Among the top 100 US cities surveyed, they ranked **Austin** and **Houston** below the Alamo City. [Details](#).

The *Houston Chronicle* came out with guns blazing against the state's Chapter 313 economic development tax-abatement deals, calling the program a 'wasteful,' 'jaw-dropping,' 'infuriating,' '\$10 billion boondoggle' before turning *really* negative. They say Texas pays nearly \$212,000 per job delivered by the program. Ouch. [Opinion](#).

In a slight disappointment for those hoping to expand the blossoming auto-tech sector in the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor**, electric car manufacturer Rivian will likely announce this week that it has chosen a site near **Atlanta**, Georgia rather than Texas for its newest factory. [Story](#).

An **Austin**-based trucking start-up, AI Fleet, believes it can crack the code of supply chain disruptions and driver shortages by using artificial intelligence and focusing on needs of the drivers themselves. Founded by principals from the software industry, the company runs its own fleet with AI-driven booking systems and tailors loads to available drivers. [Story](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"Be happy for this moment. This moment is your life."*

- Omar Khayyam

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