



## Monday Morning Report

December 20, 2021

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### INTERNAL

Congratulations to our friends at the **San Antonio** Mobility Coalition, which celebrated their 20th anniversary last week under the energetic (and always unflappable) leadership of Vic Boyer - incidentally, an Executive Committee member of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council. See a video presentation cataloging the organization's history and achievements [here](#).

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled to meet Wednesday, January 19, at 2:00 pm by Zoom videoconference. To add an item to the agenda, email [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org)

COVID-19 UPDATE: Grim news. Global cases are up by 5 million to 275 million as of this morning, with 5,356,978 fatalities. US cases are at 50,846,841, with 806,437 deaths. (12/20/21) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Texas reported 3,658,609 confirmed cases yesterday with 73,859 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 273,537 cases with 5,314 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 18,206 cases, with 348 (-1) deaths; **Comal County**: 11,989 cases, with 471 deaths; **Hays County**: 31,020 cases with 360 deaths; **Travis County**: 125,102 cases with 1,492 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 68,676 cases with 736 deaths (12/19/21). ([TDHHS](#)).

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

A recent **New York Times** article examining why US infrastructure costs are so much higher than other countries found that 'cost overruns, engineering challenges, and political obstacles have made it all but impossible to complete a major, multi-million-dollar US infrastructure project on budget and on schedule.' ([here](#)) The conservative *Manhattan Institute* now contends the article cites outdated research and conflicted sources to reach a flawed conclusion. Poor civil service oversight of contractors is the real problem, they say. [Opinion](#).

The Biden administration's push to deploy 500,000 electric vehicle charging locations nationwide has revealed an outmoded division of responsibility between cabinet officials, leading to creation of a White House Joint Office for Energy & Transportation. \$7.5 billion will flow towards the charging network, with a deployment plan due in February, national standards by May. More details on the plan emerged from **Washington** last week. [Story](#).

Five potential contractors - including Elon Musk's The Boring Company - have submitted bids to the Alamo Regional Mobility Authority to move people from **San Antonio** International Airport to downtown. The proposals include underground tunnels using Tesla electric vehicles, a rail transit project, and some autonomous alternatives. A finalist could be selected by Feb. 22, if the project moves forward at all. [Story](#).

The city council in **Leander** is eyeing a withdrawal from **Austin** transit provider Capital Metro. A private consultant's presentation last week suggested the city is overpaying for bus and rail transit, currently about \$9.3 million per year for less than 1000 riders per day. A public vote would be required, and fiscal obligations would remain on some \$30 million in prior rail investments. [Story](#).

Drexel University's urban finance specialist Bruce Katz has published "A Guide for Local Leaders" to the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, signed into law last month. Katz lists six strategies for how city and county leaders can access funding through the program to building local economies that are inclusive, innovative, and resilient. 'The days of legislative design are over; the days of delivery have just begun,' he writes. [Details](#).

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

**San Antonio** officials strongly contest reports that the city orders homes vacated and demolished at a much higher rate than other Texas cities. They say the study cited used incorrect data and lacked appropriate context. The back-and-forth includes 'apples to apples' and 'smoke and mirror' allegations. Expect a new study. [Story](#).

According to **Forbes**, trucks equipped with Aurora software, sensors, and computing systems began hauling cargo this month in partnership with Uber Freight along routes between **Dallas** and **Houston**. Using a human safety driver for now, the company plans shifting to fully autonomous deliveries by 2023. [Story](#).

The worldwide scramble to provide the rare minerals necessary for electric cars has a local **Austin** angle: the **New York Times** reports that entrepreneur Teague Egan is one of eight competitors for mining rights in Bolivia, which controls about a quarter of the world's supply of lithium. [Story](#). [More](#).

If you thought changes in the Arctic or Antarctic don't affect you, think again. Two scary stories published last week catalog massive changes underway at both poles, both indicating 'ecosystem collapse.' The **Washington Post** noted unexpected Arctic ice losses that reflect 'a pit stop on a path to an even stranger and more dangerous future.' ([here](#)) And the vital Antarctic Thwaites Shelf may shatter in 3-5 years, scientists said. [Story](#).

Sandy Paulos has taken over as the new director of finance in **New Braunfels**, replacing Jared Werner, recently promoted to assistant city manager. She previously worked with **Converse** and the **San Antonio** Water System. [Details](#). (halfway down, right hand column)

## Thought of the Week

*"Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it."*

- Maya Angelou

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