



Monday Morning Report

January 3, 2022

INTERNAL

Sad Note: Our dear friend and colleague Bruce Todd, 72, passed away on Christmas Day. Twice elected mayor of **Austin** and twice a commissioner for **Travis County**, Bruce was a former chairman and long-time member of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council. A funeral service will be held *this* Thursday, January 6, at 2-3:00 pm in Covenant Presbyterian Church, 3003 Northland Dr., followed by a committal service at the Texas State Cemetery in **Austin**. An extraordinary obituary can be found [here](#). (Don't skip the Breckenridge Boys Choir video). [More](#).

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

COVID-19 UPDATE: With local systems reaching capacity, US health officials warn that hospitalization rates are now the key factor to watch ([here](#)). Global cases as of this morning topped 290 million, with 5,445,631 deaths. US cases have reached 55.2 million, with 826,083 deaths. (1/3/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Texas was reporting 3,778,695 confirmed cases as of Thursday with 74,491 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 279,234 cases with 5,341 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 18,503 cases, with still 348 deaths; **Comal County**: 12,366 cases, with 479 deaths; **Hays County**: 32,386 cases with 362 deaths; **Travis County**: 131,767 cases with 1,500 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 71,259 cases with 741 deaths (12/30/21). ([TDHHS](#)).

INFRASTRUCTURE

That \$1 trillion infrastructure bill signed into law recently includes \$66 billion for Amtrak but, despite an ambitious long term development plan ([here](#)), it may take up to a decade before significant additional service arrives in Texas and the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor**, according to reporting in the **New York Times**. Northeast routes between **New York**, **Washington**, and **Boston** will likely see the first major Amtrak improvements. [Story](#).

Atlantic magazine highlights the proliferation of designated 'Memorial' highways, questioning the validity of the process for gaining that designation. Some states have hundreds of such highways, honoring not just military or law enforcement officers, but notables from sharpshooter Annie Oakley to football player Lou Groza. [Story](#).

In a legal brief filed last month, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton argued against Texas Central Railway's case in the state Supreme Court granting the company eminent domain authority in pursuit of a **Houston-to-Dallas** high speed train project. Paxton sided with local landowners in seeking reversal of a lower court decision. [Story](#).

National standards are beginning to emerge for deployment of a nationwide network of charging stations for electric vehicles, part of a Biden administration push to make half of all US cars sold by 2030 electric.

Next up: the debate over exactly where those stations will be located and who will pay (public or private sector?) Designated corridors have already been developed, the **Washington Post** says. [Story](#).

A **San Diego**-based company claims to have executed the first fully autonomous truck route on the open road in the US with no human safety driver aboard, successfully negotiating the 80-mile run between **Tucson** and **Phoenix**. Tech company TuSimple says support vehicles scouted in front and behind the truck involved. [Story](#).

The city council in **Leander** considers ballot language to decide whether or not to remain as part of Capital Metro this Thursday (1/6) at 6:00 pm. A public vote could come in May. [Livestream](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

How much does it take to be considered rich? GoBankingRates, a website, crunched Census Bureau annual income data to conclude that being in the top 5% of local earners qualifies, and in **San Antonio** that minimum number is just over \$101,000 per year; in **Austin** it takes \$145,000. **San Francisco** requires \$240,000. [Story](#).

If you want an indicator of just what having a Tesla mega-factory nearby means for housing, consider this: **Austin**'s Easton Park neighborhood - near Bergstrom International Airport - could see up to 12,000 new homes and apartment, the **Austin Business Journal** says. [Story](#).

More Tesla: In what is called a 'jaw-dropping' surprise for Wall Street, **Austin**-based Tesla announced that it had delivered a record 936,000 vehicles in 2021, up 87% over the previous year. The numbers were deemed even more remarkable given overall headwinds for the auto industry, including a worldwide chip shortage. [Story](#).

Yearend wrap-ups of local news stories are running everywhere it seems as we enter the new year, but the best job of these traditional summaries so far comes from **New Braunfels** and the **Herald-Zeitung**, which posted an eight-part series covering everything from population changes to housing prices to local water accidents ([here](#)).

Rolling Stone magazine weighed in this month on the scary scenarios developing for the Thwaites Glacier in **Antarctica**, which is disappearing faster than scientists had predicted, with implications for 250 million people worldwide living in low-lying coastal regions - including 6.5 million Texans. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"Everybody needs a passion. That's what keeps life interesting. If you live without passion, you can go through life without leaving any footprints."

- Betty White

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