



Monday Morning Report

January 8, 2024

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled to meet Wednesday (1/17) at 2:00 pm via Zoom. If you would like to add an item to the agenda, contact council@thecorridor.org.

INFRASTRUCTURE

In year-end wrap-up stories about their achievements in 2023 and priorities for 2024, **Travis County** judge Andy Brown and **Bexar County** judge Peter Sakai both mentioned revived talks and planning for a passenger rail connection between **Austin** and **San Antonio**, but neither seemed ready to reveal specifics, yet. [Bexar. Travis.](#)

US Senator Ted Cruz and House representative Henry Cuellar were in **Laredo** last week to highlight a new law clearing roadblocks to the expansion and construction of new bridge projects in **Webb, Maverick, and Cameron Counties** linking Texas and Mexico. The law sets a 'shot clock' to force building decisions by April 2024. [Story.](#)

In other US-Mexico border news, a new 48-inch pipeline to move natural gas from West Texas to the Mexican coast is getting opposition from **Van Horn** (population 2,000), midway along I-10 between **El Paso** and **Midland-Odessa**. Residents cite safety concerns, but environmental groups say larger issues are involved. [Story.](#)

Speeding fatalities are at their highest levels in 14 years and five of the *Top 25 Most Dangerous Spots in the US* are in Texas, [Consumer Affairs](#) reports, but none in the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** - where congestion may keep speeds largely at non-lethal levels. **Beaumont, Odessa, Dallas, and Amarillo**, not so much. [Details.](#)

Strong consumer demand, pricing, and climate change concerns are driving a massive surge in passenger train services across the European Union, with ridership up over 50% since 2021 - now totaling 245 billion passenger-miles per year. Governments and private investors are flocking to build new routes to meet demand. [Details.](#)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Despite widespread media coverage of rising heat indexes and dwindling water resources, a **New York Times** opinion-writer is advising folks not to give up on the American Southwest but to consider the changing environment as an opportunity for centuries of climate-adaptation ingenuity to be put to good use. [Opinion.](#)

Although more electric vehicles were sold in 2023 than the years 2016-2021 combined, industry leaders report slowing sales due to insufficient charging infrastructure and too-high prices.

Business Insider says the slowdown is symptomatic of an uglier problem: the myth that EVs can seamlessly replace traditional cars. [Details](#).

TechCrunch tested and compared the leading five level-3 Driver Assistance systems from BMW, Ford, GM, Mercedes, and **Austin**-based Tesla to find which one offered the best cost/benefit/safety ratio. The result: only Tesla was singled out for safety and cost criticism. [Story](#).

California is moving aggressively to phase out the roughly 30,000 carbon-producing diesel trucks at the ports of **Los Angeles** and **Long Beach**, on its way to a total statewide ban over the next two decades. But high costs, maintenance issues, and even the federal government are all posing significant challenges. [Story](#).

Southern Living has discovered the best traditional restaurant in the Texas Hill Country, naming it a 'legend of the South.' The nearly one-hundred-year-old Blue Bonnet Cafe in **Marble Falls** was cited in particular for its selection of a dozen homemade pies, and we vouch for the coconut creme: Worth every carb and calorie. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"Approach the New Year with resolve to find the opportunities hidden in each new day."

- Michael Josephson

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