



Monday Morning Report

January 23, 2023

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council met last week (1/18) met last week via Zoom for various project updates, approvals for the 2023 budget, and passing a resolution of support for \$200 million in Legislative funding for the Texas Rail Relocation and Improvement Fund to match potential federal funding of Amtrak expansions. For more information, contact council@thecorridor.org.

CORRECTION, Spellcheck Unhinged: Last week's item about the **San Antonio** Mobility Coalition Rail Committee meeting Feb. 17, misspelled the name of Amtrak's Director of Government Affairs, Southern Division. He is Todd Stennis, who will be discussing Amtrak's Connect US expansion plans. Zoom link [here](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

The **Austin** city council's Mobility Committee got a staff briefing last week on the IH-35 'Cap and Stitch' effort to cover sections of the highway with public spaces and re-connect East and West Austin downtown ([here](#)). And **Community Impact** took a deep dive into political support and financing challenges for the project. TxDOT is still receiving public comment on the Central Expressway. [Story](#). [Public Comment](#).

Responding to record population growth in **Comal** and **Guadalupe Counties**, TxDOT is proposing a major expansion of State Highway 46 between **Seguin** and **New Braunfels**. The project will add two additional lanes, multiple overpasses, improved intersections, and ramp changes where the highway crosses IH-35. [Story](#).

Vonlane will begin offering luxury bus service from **San Antonio** to **Dallas** next month (2/10). The **Dallas**-based company describes the \$139, four-and-a-half hour trip as being like a 'private jet on wheels,' and the service will operate three times daily beginning at 6:00 am. [Story](#). [More Details](#).

More details emerged last week about that INRIX 2022 Global Traffic Scorecard highlighting **Chicago** as the most-congested US city (in terms of hours lost in congestion). **Dallas** ranked 14th, **Houston** ranked ninth, and **Austin** ranked 18th. **San Antonio** didn't make the Top 25 List (and that's a good thing). [Story](#). [The Scorecard](#).

You may recall that massive 133-vehicle crash on IH-35 in February 2021 that killed six people near **Fort Worth**. A National Transportation Safety Board released parts of a report on the pile-up last week showed that *average* speeds before the crash exceeded 100 miles-per-hour. A final report is due later this year. [Story](#).

Austin assistant city manager Gina Fiandaca, who has been handling the city's transportation portfolio since 2019, is leaving later this month to become transportation secretary for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. [Details](#).

The Verge interviews 17 transportation experts for 2023 predictions. Surprises: micro-mobility e-scooters companies collapse as investors and mobility-impaired pedestrians tire of them; car prices fall; pedestrian fatalities soar; autonomous companies consolidate and emphasis shifts away from full autonomous. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Former **San Antonio** mayor Henry Cisneros - in an opinion editorial published last week - called attention to a recent report from the University of North Carolina that ranks economic progress in the nation's 50 largest extended metropolitan areas, asserting that it offers objective third-party affirmation that **San Antonio's** economic development efforts are succeeding. [Op-Ed. Report](#).

MovieMaker, a **Hollywood**-based website, ranked **Atlanta** as the 'film-friendliest' of the 25 Best Places to Live and Work for making movies in the US, and **Austin** ranked 20th, **San Antonio**, 22nd. The list criteria include surveys, production spending, tax incentives, and other research data. [Story](#).

The **Sacramento Bee** reports a claim by California governor Gavin Newsom, made while introducing the state's annual budget, that 95% of Texans pay more taxes than Californians. The claim is apparently based on a 2018 report from a liberal-leaning think tank that also concluded California has the nation's fairest tax system, but that Texas has the nation's second unfairest, after Washington. [Story](#).

Scientists tagged a wandering elephant seal in a remote part of the Indian Ocean and the animal led them to signs of a potential climate disaster, the melting of a crucial Antarctic glacier called Denman. The **Washington Post** reports on a looming global warming threat that has a curious **Austin** connection. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts."

- Eleanor Roosevelt

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