



## Monday Morning Report

January 24, 2022

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### INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council's Executive Committee met last week (1/19) to hear a presentation on **San Antonio's** \$200 million, five-year program jobs program, to approve a 2022 budget, and to receive updates on regional highway and rail projects. Review the agenda [here](#).

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global cases reached 352.1 million this morning, with 5.6 million deaths. US cases topped 70.7 million with 866,541 deaths. (1/24/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Texas was reporting 4,944,397 confirmed cases with 76,785 deaths yesterday, including in **Bexar County**: 397,497 cases with 5,466 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 23,448 cases, with 352 deaths; **Comal County**: 18,873 cases, with 490 deaths; **Hays County**: 46,298 cases with 380 deaths; **Travis County**: 183,782 cases with 1,541 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 96,821 cases with 771 deaths (1/23/22). ([TDHHS](#)). For current regional hospitalization-rate data, go [here](#).

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

The pandemic-inspired trend toward remote work has devastated ridership and revenue numbers for legacy commuter rail systems in **New York**, negatively effecting linked restaurants, stores, and other businesses that depend upon commuters. Ridership is down to 40% of pre-pandemic levels and some ticket sales are off by 75%. Similar systems nationwide also face large losses, only offset by billions in federal aid. [Story](#).

Capital Metro has received its first tranche of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding for **Austin's** Project Connect urban rail network. The \$900,000 from the FTA's Capital Investment Program will go towards a pilot study of an equity-based approach to transit-oriented development along the project's initial corridor. [Story](#).

In other Capital Metro news, **Leander** has put off a decision on calling for a public vote to withdraw from the agency until after hearing about compromise proposals expected to be aired at the Capital Metro board meeting at 12:00 noon later *today*. [Story](#). Watch meeting [here](#).

TxDOT's big annual Texas Transportation Forum is set for Feb. 6-8 in **San Antonio**. Go [here](#) for the event's summary web page. [Agenda](#).

Last week's kerfuffle over deploying 5G cell phone service near US airports could and should have been avoided, argues a **Washington**-based [Brookings Institute](#) writer while tracing the history of such previous technological rollouts. The key issues: federal tech standards for aviation altimeters and a lot of miscommunications. [Opinion](#).

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Congratulations to Texas State University in **San Marcos** and Amazon for sealing a partnership aimed at 'up-skilling' the online behemoth's workforce. The partnership is one phase of Amazon's three-year, \$1.2 billion program to improve educational attainment for 300,000 of the firm's US employees. [Story](#).

A massive \$500 million development along State Highway 130 will provide 4000 new homes, condos, and apartments plus commercial, retail, and recreational spaces to the housing-starved **Austin** market. Called *Mirador*, the project links Houston-based Hines company with a raft of familiar Central Texas home builders. [Story](#).

The biggest impediment to widespread adoption of electric vehicles in the US is decades-old laws that protect traditional car dealers from competition, says *The Atlantic*. The magazine argues that 17 states, including Texas, forbid any but legacy manufacturers from opening retail stores and selling directly to consumers. [Story](#).

A *Washington Post* columnist says that if endangered local journalism outlets survive, we have Evan Smith of the *Texas Tribune* to thank. Margaret Sullivan salutes the retiring founder and chief executive of the **Austin**-based news service as a 'true pioneer,' and 'force of nature.' We agree. [Opinion](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."*

- George Bernard Shaw

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