



Monday Morning Report

January 29, 2024

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council is scheduled to meet Wednesday (2/21) by Zoom. For more information or to add an item to the agenda, contact council@thecorridor.org.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Those proposed multi-acre 'Cap and Stitch' projects over Interstate 35 in central **Austin** are moving closer to becoming a reality, according to a panel discussion sponsored last week by the Urban Land Institute. TxDOT has agreed to engineering designs that will support the effort and the current vision includes compact two-and-three story buildings for retail, arts spaces, or limited housing. Next up: how to pay for it. [Story](#).

Nearly one year after a devastating train derailment in **East Palestine**, OH sparked nation-wide calls for increased federal safety scrutiny of freight railroads, recent data shows that the number of accidents on the largest Class One railroads went up by 13.5% in 2023, not down. Though a bipartisan bill strengthening safety oversight was introduced right after the accident, Congress never acted upon it. [Story](#).

Brightline's proposed Los **Angeles-to-Las Vegas** high-speed passenger rail line got a \$2.5 billion boost from the Biden administration last week. The funds come in the form of private activity bonds, essentially low-interest infrastructure loans. That now totals \$6.5 billion in federal funds committed to the \$12 billion project. [Story](#).

In what may be a harbinger of things to come elsewhere, **San Francisco** has sued the state of California for lax regulation of self-driving cars, which the city's lawsuit calls 'unsafe' and 'disruptive.' The move could inspire other states - like Texas and Nevada - where autonomous vehicles have been deployed. [Story](#).

The **San Antonio** Mobility Coalition is hosting a luncheon event with TxDOT commissioner Alex Meade on Wednesday, March 6 as part of their Transportation Leadership Series. [Details](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Austin-based Tesla has filed permitting paperwork with Texas regulators for a new \$200,000 facility along IH-35 in **New Braunfels**, but no one is yet saying what the project is - speculation is that it will be new charging infrastructure for electric vehicles, the *Express-News* reports. [Story](#).

News teams at both ends of the Corridor turned their attention last week to upcoming mayor's races in **Austin** and **San Antonio**. Four Alamo City council members have expressed an interest in

the top job for the May 2025 election. At least two challengers have come forward for the November 2024 **Austin** race. [Austin](#). [San Antonio](#).

Responding to an increased risk of wildfires in the nearby Hill Country, the **Express-News** reports that **Buda** is building a new \$4 million fire-fighting substation, set to open in 2025. The report says Texas fought 7000 wildfires, which burned more than 5,000-acres, in 2023. [Story](#).

Dripping Springs residents - citing water & infrastructure concerns - are pushing back on a California company's plans for a 5,000-seat entertainment venue proposed for a 32-acre site southwest of **Austin**. There's a related Texas Commission on Environmental Quality public meeting at 7:00 pm *tonight*. [Story](#). [Meeting Details](#).

Global supply chains are continuing to suffer consequences from water-level problems in the Panama Canal and Houthi rebel attacks in the Red Sea. Higher insurance rates and fuel costs, two-week delays caused by longer sea routes, and a container shortage led one index measuring shipping rates to double since last year. [Story](#).

New research published last week in **Nature**, based upon a study of more than 1700 aquifers in 40 countries, documents widespread declines in groundwater aquifer levels, with nearly half of the sites studied seriously depleted. 80% of those declining aquifers also suffered historic shortages of rain and snow. [Story](#). [More](#). [Still More](#).

Thought of the Week

"People who know little are usually great talkers, while men who know much say little."

- Rousseau

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