



Monday Morning Report

February 14, 2022

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee will meet *this* Wednesday, February 16, at 2:00 pm by Zoom videoconference. For questions, email council@thecorridor.org. **Draft Agenda**.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global cases are at 412.2 million as of this morning, with 5.8 million deaths. US cases are at 77.7 million with 919,694 deaths. (2/14/22) (**Johns Hopkins**). Yesterday, Texas was reporting 5,366,964 confirmed cases with 80,988 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 455,796 cases with 5,722 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 25,773 cases, with 370 deaths; **Comal County**: 21,260 cases, with 513 deaths; **Hays County**: 50,810 cases with 403 deaths; **Travis County**: 199,160 cases with 1,631 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 106,185 cases with 819 deaths (2/13/22). (**TDHHS**). For current regional hospitalization-rate data, go [here](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Traffic on State Highway 130 between **Seguin** and **Georgetown** has 'skyrocketed' to nearly 10 million vehicles per year due to population growth, pandemic recovery, new development, and **Austin** traffic congestion, reports local newsletter **Austonia**. Interestingly, despite the highest speed limits in the US (85 mph) and a 50% increase in truck traffic, accidents along the highway have actually *decreased* in the past year. **Details**.

According to a 2022 list from the American Transportation Research Institute, fourteen of the top 100 worst trucking chokepoints in the US are in Texas, and one in ten are in **Houston**. Ranking 27th is IH-35 in **Austin**. Avoiding the top 100 altogether was **San Antonio**, which didn't make the list. **Story Report**.

Speaking of trucks (above), the **New York Times** suggests that the real reason for a US truck driver shortage approaching 80,000 vacancies is that it's a lousy job characterized by stress, physical deprivation, and loneliness. Further, some experts say the notion of a shortage is a push by the industry for federal training subsidies, although reporting reveals that the average trucking company does have an annual turnover rate of 95%. **Story**.

Good News: An advanced rapid transit north/south bus project by VIA in **San Antonio** has received approval from the Federal Transit Administration, potentially putting it in line for a Capital Investment Grant ([here](#) & [here](#)). The 11.7-mile, \$320 million effort has requested \$158.08 million in federal funding. **Project Description**.

TxDOT's turnaround on relinquishing state control over projects in **Austin** and **San Antonio**, on Broadway and South Lamar respectively, continue to bedevil local jurisdictions trying to develop commercial corridors in line with community interests. And as tensions escalate, usually measured bureaucratic language is devolving. **Story**.

Video footage reviewed by a **Washington Post** panel of experts show auto-piloted Teslas trying to drive down a light rail line, breezing through pedestrian crosswalks, and slamming into a bike lane bollard. 'These are problems with no easy fix,' found the panel, 'where the nearly infinite array of possible real-life scenarios is simply too much for Tesla' algorithms to master. Federal investigations to date are surveyed. [Story](#).

Just as the federal government is about to deploy billions of dollars to improve water systems, including storm water drainage systems, US cities are finding that their planning efforts are being hampered by obsolete 50-year-old rainfall data that has itself sometimes been drastically altered by climate change, reports **NPR**. Planners want systematic updates of the so-called Atlas 14 precipitation reports. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Sylnovia Holt-Rabb was named last week as the new director of economic development for **Austin**. Holt-Rabb has worked for the city for 20 years, previously in economic development roles or as finance manager for the housing and planning departments. [Details](#) (right hand column).

Two controversial real estate development projects remind some locals of the builders-vs-environmentalists battles of the 1990's: the Violet Crown performance amphitheater project ten miles from downtown **Austin** has united a raft of local environmental groups in opposition ([here](#)); and the 2500-home Persimmon development near **Buda** in **Hays County** has earned an overwhelming thumbs-down from city leaders. [Details](#).

A new conservation easement will protect from development a 621-acre tract of Honey Creek Spring Ranch in **Comal County** west of **New Braunfels**, officials announced last week, adding to nearly 3000-acres of previously protected land south of Honey Creek Natural Area and Guadalupe River State Park. [Story](#).

The **Austin** Chamber of Commerce presents a virtual demographic and data trends program, *Austin Snapshot*, Friday, Feb. 18, 11-12 noon, with Dr. James Henson of UT and city demographer Dr. Lila Valencia. Register [here](#).

Mexico claimed over the weekend that the US had suspended shipments of avocados from the state of Michoacan, the nation's largest producer, due to security risks to American inspection personnel. US diplomats said only that Mexican avocados were facing heightened inspections, **Reuters** reported. [Story](#).

According to a study of 4000 cities by **Doxo** (who must have a lot of time on their hands) that analyzes the ten most common household bills, Texas is the 20th most expensive cost-of-living state in the country. **Austin** comes in as the 964th most expensive city; **San Antonio** placed 2469th. [Story](#). [Interactive rankings](#).

Thought of the Week

"Don't watch the clock; do what it does. Keep going."

- Sam Levenson

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