



Monday Morning Report

March 14, 2022

INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee will be on April 20 at 2 PM by videoconference. To add an item to the April 20 agenda, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global confirmed cases this morning reached 456.9 million, with 6,041,077 fatalities. US cases started leveling off to 79.5 million with 967,552 deaths. (3/14/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Yesterday, Texas reported 5,458,676 confirmed cases with 85,039 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 465,072 cases with 6,001 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 26,109 cases, with 396 deaths; **Comal County**: 21,788 cases, with 540 deaths; **Hays County**: 51,699 cases with 426 deaths; **Travis County**: 201,603 cases with 1,692 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 108,011 cases with 859 deaths (3/13/22). ([TDHHS](#)). *Current regional hospitalization-rate data is found [here](#).*

INFRASTRUCTURE

Brookings Metro in **Washington** has created interactive tools and information hubs for practitioners and policymakers trying to navigate funding mechanisms in the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), including sections on how it works and how specific programs can benefit particular places. Transportation, transit, rail, broadband, and water are covered in detail beginning [here](#).

In a cautionary tale for transit providers, **Houston** Metro reports that its first-ever rapid bus transit line is carrying just a fraction (less than 10%) of the ridership projections given to the public when the project was first opened in August 2020. Instead of 12,000 daily riders, it carries 800 - after a \$192 million roadway upgrade. [Story](#).

The **New York Times** reports this morning that a \$105 billion price tag and fundamental questions about political support are creating a critical juncture for the high-speed rail project between **Los Angeles** and **San Francisco**: either achieve the original vision for the ambitious project or leave it in an expensive limbo. [Story](#).

San Antonio International Airport announced last week that Frontier Airlines will be resuming and introducing new non-stop flights, just in time for summer vacation season. Non-stop service to **Atlanta** (disrupted by pandemic) will resume on May 26; three-times-per-week non-stops to **Philadelphia** begin June 15. [Details](#).

Interim charges for state legislative committees were released in **Austin** last week by Speaker of the House Dade Phelan, including a laundry list of studies for the House Transportation Committee involving three funding initiatives, autonomous vehicles, electric vehicle fees, border infrastructure, and more. [Details](#).

The Census Bureau may have significantly miscounted the 2020 US population - particularly minorities - by up to 19 million people, calling into question data used to calculate \$1.5 trillion in federal formula

funding and the apportionment of a decade's worth of Congressional and state legislative districts. [Story](#).
[More. Clarification.](#)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Russia-Ukraine War Sanctions Hit Close to Home: **San Antonio**'s independent refiner Valero Energy, which reportedly bought one-fifth of all Russian crude oil imported to the US in 2021, is scrambling to find new energy sources after the Biden administration banned all such imports last week, the **Express-News** reports. [Story](#).

Even as their northern neighbor **Austin** cranks out headlines touting break-through technology disruptions and a record-breaking investment climate ([here](#)), the **San Antonio**'s Geekdom - a for-profit coworking space founded by Rackspace entrepreneur Graham Weston - announced last week that is turning to the 'South Texas Triangle' (**Laredo**, **Corpus Christi**, and **Guadalajara** are cited) for new partnerships and start-ups. [Story](#).

Beset by booming population growth, climate change, groundwater shortages, and political challenges, the Texas Hill Country is newly more fragile and vulnerable, reports **Axios Austin**, citing a just-released report from the Texas Hill Country Conservation Network. The Texas Legislature 'regularly rebuffs' proposals to give county governments authority to regulate land development, the group says. [Story Report](#).

A longtime critic of the state's economic development-driven tax abatement rules is praising a decision by little **Bandera**, TX - the 'Cowboy Capital of The World' - to vote down a Chapter 313 tax break from the local school district for a \$102 million solar farm project. Michael Taylor calls the underlying law 'fiendish.' [Opinion](#).

Bexar County judge Nelson Wolff has a new book coming out: *'The Mayor and the Judge: The Inside Story of the War Against Covid,'* in which he levels some pretty strong criticism at former president Donald Trump, Texas governor Greg Abbott, and - himself, according to the **Express-News**. Reviewed [here](#).

After a long hiatus due to the Covid pandemic, the **New Braunfels** Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau are reopening that familiar Visitor's Information Center just off IH-35 at South Seguin Avenue for tourists and conventioners - and just in time for Spring Break. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"Destiny is no matter of chance. It is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved."

- William Jennings Bryan

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