



## Monday Morning Report

March 28, 2022

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### INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled for April 20 at 2 PM by videoconference. To add an item to the agenda, contact [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org).

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global confirmed cases this morning reached 481.1 million, with 6,124,193 fatalities. US cases remain just under 80 million with 976,984 deaths. (3/28/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). As of yesterday afternoon, Texas was reporting 5,494,888 confirmed cases with 85,859 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 468,802 cases with 6,071 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 26,205 cases, with 397 deaths; **Comal County**: 21,951 cases, with 544 deaths; **Hays County**: 51,877 cases with 430 deaths; **Travis County**: 202,459 cases with 1,710 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 108,382 cases with 868 deaths (3/27/22). ([TDHHS](#)). *Current regional hospitalization-rate data is found [here](#).*

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

"There's no reason that quality, speedy train service should only be something in the Northeast," US Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg told the **Texas Tribune** last week while in **Austin**, adding that Texas "is a great place for those kinds of deployments." In addition to high-speed rail, Buttigieg addressed the Interstate 35 Capital Expressway project, highway expansion vs. maintenance in Texas, light rail in the capital, and more [here](#).

Secretary Pete Buttigieg also announced earlier last week from **Washington** that the applications process for three programs worth \$2.9 billion would be merged to speed up funding for so-called "Mega Projects" - those initiatives expected to cost more than \$500 million - that would boost local economies across the US. Eligible projects could include roads, bridges, tunnels, ports, or rail lines. Applications are due in two months. [Story](#).

The **Austin** Transportation Department said last week that it is eyeing, in partnership with Capital Metro, another part of the federal infrastructure funding package passed last year for a \$40 million multi-modal corridor using the old Bergstrom Spur rail line to connect trails east-to-west across the southern portion of the city. [Details](#).

The Alamo Regional Transportation Authority voted to move forward on a contract with Elon Musk's The Boring Company to build a tunnel loop connecting **San Antonio** International Airport to downtown, possibly to also include a leg connecting the Convention Center to the Pearl mixed use development on Broadway. [Details](#). Not everyone thinks the tunnel is a good idea. [More](#).

A climate change-inspired wave of invasive insects may be coming to a tree-lined street near you, says a new study by international scientists reported in the **Washington Post**, and by 2050 more than 1.5 million US urban trees will die off due to various pest populations. Worldwide, over 100 million trees may be lost in the next three decades, the report says, but there are possible mitigation strategies. [Story](#).

With 40% of the state under extreme drought conditions, and big fires already burning in north and central Texas, officials are warning of dangerous conditions in coming weeks for uncontrolled wildfires ([here](#)). But the *Texas Tribune's* Ross Ramsey notes that while there will always be fires and storms, they often only get attention when used by political figures to avoid other topics they'd rather not talk about. [Opinion](#).

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Electric vehicles took center stage at the just-concluded South By Southwest conference in **Austin**, highlighting the city's emergence as a center for tech-driven innovation in the auto industry - although high-profile (and home-based) Tesla didn't participate in SXSW's new, dedicated EV-related programming track. Other major EV-producers attended, most forecasting the end of the "ICE Age" - that is, 'internal combustion engine.' [Story](#).

Commercial truck manufacturer Navistar showed off its new \$250 million, 900,000 square-foot facility in **San Antonio** last week, which according to the company will bring 600 jobs to the city's south side and build 110 Class 6-8 commercial trucks, including electric vehicles, per day. [Story](#).

Although it dwarfs the stock market in total value, the bond market usually receives much less news coverage and thus you may not have noticed that bonds are having a 'horrendous' year, according to the *New York Times*. High inflation and interest rate hikes have generated big price declines not seen since the 1980's. [Story](#).

Newly analyzed 2020-21 census data continues to show a population drain from major cities in the Northeast and West (**New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco**) to smaller cities in the South and Southwest (including the **Austin** and **San Antonio** metro areas), details [here](#). Numerically, **Austin** added 53,301 people and **San Antonio** added 35,105 people, year-over-year, for a new combined total population of 4,954,217. [Story](#).

That rapid population migration (above) shows that Texas has four of the ten fastest-growing metro-areas in the US, numerically, in net growth: **Dallas** ranked first; **Austin-Round Rock** ranked second; **San Antonio-New Braunfels** ranked eighth. [Chart](#). Real estate impacts in **Williamson County** are surveyed [here](#).

**New Braunfels** has an interesting new niche business, Pakmule - making 100% aluminum cargo carriers designed to attach to the rear of vehicles - created by a former Texas State University in **San Marcos** student who wanted a light-weight container for packing up camping gear - or the family dog. No place but Texas. [Story](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"Plans to protect air and water, wilderness and wildlife are in fact plans to protect man."*

- Stewart Udall

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