



## Monday Morning Report

April 11, 2022

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### INTERNAL

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

"Pretending that the pandemic is over will not make it so." While deaths and hospitalizations from COVID-19 are greatly reduced from previous highs, infections are surging in some regions and a new variant may bring new threats, the **New York Times** warns. [Opinion](#).

**COVID-19 UPDATE:** Global confirmed cases this morning reached 498.1 million, with 6,176,420 fatalities. US cases are at 80.4 million with 985,482 deaths. (4/11/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Yesterday, Texas reported 5,517,585 confirmed cases with 86,241 deaths, including in **Bexar County:** 470,275 cases with 6,103 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 26,284 cases, still with 398 deaths; **Comal County:** 22,027 cases, with 546 deaths; **Hays County:** 52,023 cases still with 430 deaths; **Travis County:** 203,668 cases with 1,721 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 109,027 cases with 870 deaths (4/10/22). ([TDHHS](#)). *Current regional hospitalization-rate data is found [here](#).*

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

Ten counties along the route of that **Houston-to-Dallas** high speed rail project say that Texas Central Railway failed to pay 2021 property tax bills for land acquired as right of way, now overdue in an amount exceeding \$260,000. Eight of those counties (but not the largest, **Harris & Dallas Counties**) filed a brief on behalf of landowners opposing the project in a case currently pending in the Texas Supreme Court. [Story. More](#).

In Europe, governments are racing to expand high speed rail lines in response to climate change, often adding amenities to attract travelers or even eliminating short haul airplane flights over competing routes that trains service in under two-and-a-half hours - as France and Austria have done. Overnight luxury service over longer routes is also expanding, with a new **Vienna-to-Paris** overnight train cited as an example. [Story](#).

National and international 'smart cities' researchers, enthusiasts, and policy practitioners will gather in **Austin** later this month (4/28-29) for an *Intelligent Infrastructure Conference*, billed as "Seizing the Opportunity to Transform the Economy, National Security, and Jobs Growth." [Program. Speakers. Why Attend. Tickets](#).

Projected costs on Capital Metro's Project Connect light rail plan in **Austin** appear to be going up by about \$3 billion, according to a staff memo released last week that blamed inflation and soaring real estate costs as the primary drivers of a new cost estimate north of \$10 billion. [Story. Memo](#).

With more droughts and higher temperatures in the long-term climate change-driven forecast, the **San Antonio Report** finds the city's fire departments and water systems already preparing for a difficult

season (and already facing a 'red flag' warning over a windy, dry weekend). [Story](#). Two years ago, **Austin** underwent a similar assessment after California experts found an 'obvious risk' of wildfires [here](#).

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Behind the flashy headlines surrounding the Cyber Rodeo opening of Tesla's 'giga-factory' for electric cars and batteries in **Austin** last week there was some actual news: Elon Musk said the plant would produce a half-million vehicles a year, making it the highest-volume car factory in the country ([here](#)); and he unveiled plans for an Austin-built autonomous, futuristic-looking electric 'robo-taxi,' though without a defined timeline. [Story](#).

Joining Tesla in the race to develop its self-driving technology will be legacy auto-manufacturer Toyota, according to a [Reuters](#) report out of **San Francisco**, which says the joint venture will involve low-cost cameras to collect data and effectively 'train' its autonomous technology without the use of expensive lidar sensors. [Story](#).

In another autonomous vehicle development, self-driving freight trucking companies have completed four roundtrips between **Dallas** and **Atlanta** (a total of 6,350 miles), operating 24-hours a day for 131 total hours, or about six days without intervention by rotating safety drivers aboard. The process will allow carriers to haul more freight with fewer trucks, thus increasing revenue while decreasing costs, the companies said. [Story](#).

A groundbreaking ceremony is scheduled this week (4/12) for that massive Mayfair development - 1900-acres, with 6000 residential units, four schools, and 70-acres of commercial space - north of **New Braunfels** on IH-35. The development will eventually also have 330-acres of public parks and other amenities. [Story](#).

The small city of **Hays**, in **Hays County**, is just south of **Austin** but feeling the state capital's growing pains. Currently with a population of 257, development plans just beyond its city limits could double the town's population - and not everyone is happy about it. [Story](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"The way I see it, if you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain."*

- Dolly Parton

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