



Monday Morning Report

May 22, 2023

INTERNAL

At last week's Executive Committee meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council (5/17), members heard presentations from the **New Braunfels** Chamber of Commerce and the SH 130 Concession group about a proposed new highway connector route from IH-35 to State Highway 130, and details about the massive SouthStar development project underway between **San Marcos** and **New Braunfels** on both sides of IH-35. Staff also updated members on Congressional steps taken regarding enhanced local Amtrak service, the TxDOT IH-10 & US 90 Study Working Groups, and a series of recent legislative developments. For more information, email council@thecorridor.org.

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, June 21 at 2pm by Zoom videoconference.

INFRASTRUCTURE

A panel of municipal financial experts warned in newsletter **RouteFifty** last week that cities trying to recover from the pandemic face a new array of challenges including the imminent end of federal COVID-19 aid, de-populated downtowns, inflation-driven increases in pension, health, and policing costs, and a simultaneous rise in demand for social and other city-provided services. "We're at an inflection point," said an expert. [Story](#).

Already beset by legislative efforts to unravel its complex funding scenario, **Austin's** light rail-and-transit Project Connect effort took another hit last week when Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton officially opined that the unique funding mechanisms involved are likely illegal under state law. He said more, none of it good. [Story](#).

San Antonio mayor Ron Nirenberg slammed legislation approved last week (House Bill 2127) that would bar cities and counties from issuing local ordinances that go beyond what is already allowed under state law, potentially impacting municipal action on labor laws, agriculture, natural resources, and finance. "The bill is undemocratic," Nirenberg said, "probably the most undemocratic thing the Legislature has done." [Story](#).

Legislation currently moving through Congress in **Washington** could aid local officials and address one of their top frustrations - freight railroads running through their towns: trains that block roadway/rail crossings for long periods of time (think Hunter Road at Centerpoint Drive in **San Marcos**). The bill calls for a study responding to 26,000 complaints about blocked crossings just in the last year alone. [Story](#).

It has been four years since the 90-year-old dam forming Lake Dunlap, near **New Braunfels**, collapsed. The Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority and local residents - with \$40 million from the Texas Water Development Board - funded replacing the dam, with construction now scheduled to be completed by this July. [Update](#). [Video](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

At just over one million residents, **Austin** is now the 10th largest city in the US by population, the Census Bureau announced last week, joining **Houston** (#4), **San Antonio** (#7), and **Dallas** (#9) among America's Top Ten most-populous cities. And **Georgetown, San Marcos, Kyle, Leander, and New Braunfels** made the list of the Top 15 fastest-growing cities in the US. [Story. More.](#)

Marking the 30th anniversary year of the Alamodome's opening last week, a city-commissioned study has found that the facility generated \$4 billion in economic benefits for **San Antonio** and hosted over 33 million visitors over the last three decades, including generating \$107 million in direct revenue to city coffers. [Story.](#)

In a **USA Today** reader survey, the Alamo in **San Antonio** beat Central Park in **Manhattan** and Golden Gate Bridge in **San Francisco** as 'The Best Free Attraction In 2023 In The United States,' the newspaper reported last week. And that was before the new Mission Gate and Lunette exhibits opened this month. [Story. Visit.](#)

A new industrial park coming to **San Marcos** may be one of the largest such sites anywhere in the US. The 2000-acre AXIS Logistics Park, according to a news release last week from Scarborough Lane Development, will act as a regional distribution hub for retailers, suppliers, and manufacturers. [Story. Map.](#)

Nearly twice as many Mexicans reported having been extorted for money by criminal gangs in 2022 than five years ago, the **Economist** reports. Big money comes from 'taxing' business sectors such as agriculture, mining, and fishing. Avocado growers, for example, are forced to pay a 'fee' based upon their farmed acreage. [Story.](#)

A study of the world's 2000 largest lakes has found that because of human diversion and climate change the lakes are shrinking by about 5.7 trillion gallons a year- roughly equal to the entire US's water usage in 2015, the journal **Science** reports. Even lakes in areas getting heavier rains are shriveling because warmer air sucks up more water in evaporation. Meanwhile, an historic deal is finally reached on the Colorado River. [Story. More.](#)

Ever think that you could land a jetliner in a case where the pilot was incapacitated? Think again. Although a third of Americans surveyed thought they could take over a-la-*Airplane!* the movie, the **Washington Post** ran an avionics simulator test with five volunteers and only experienced pilots walked away with their planes intact. [Story. More.](#)

Thought of the Week

"With the slightest push—in just the right place—our world can be tipped."

– Malcolm Gladwell

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