



Monday Morning Report

June 12, 2023

INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, June 21 at 2pm by Zoom, with US Representative Joaquin Castro tentatively scheduled as guest speaker. For more information, to request an invitation, or to add an item to the agenda, email council@thecorridor.org.

Last Tuesday's (6/6) briefing out of **Washington** on 'The State of Rail Safety and the Policy Path Forward,' presented by the rail advocacy group Go Rail and the American Association of Railroads (not the Federal Railroad Administration, as reported earlier) is available [here](#). The real-time emergency-responder safety information application discussed, the **AskRail** app, is available through their website, [here](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

In an alarming survey of current worldwide wildfire conditions, the **Washington Post** features an Arizona State University researcher who says the planet has entered the fire equivalent of the Ice Age, the 'Pyrocene Era.' And a **2021 scientific study** cited places the blame firmly on climate change. [Story](#). Insurance companies, citing disaster risks, are raising rates and cutting back coverage. [More](#).

The Federal Railroad Administration is putting up almost \$5 million in project development and final design funding to eliminate an at-grade Union Pacific Railroad crossing at Rittiman Road in **San Antonio**. Without the improvements, vehicular traffic would be blocked 40% of peak period travel time by 2045, planning documents say. [Story](#). [Project Description](#). [More](#).

Years of public meetings, elections, and planning work culminated in official votes last week approving a whittled-down, roughly \$5 billion Project Connect light rail and rapid bus transit plan for **Austin**. The basic outline is for 10-miles of street-level rail through downtown from 38th and Guadalupe southward, crossing Lady Bird Lake, then splitting into one line east along Riverside Drive and another continuing along South Congress to Oltorf. [Details](#).

General Motors joined an earlier move by Ford Motor Company last week in announcing that it would use **Austin**-based Tesla's plug technology to charge its electric vehicles, opening the opportunity for both companies' products to share Tesla's more widespread and reliable charging network. [Story](#).

It's been a tough news week for autonomous vehicles: the **Washington Post** reported that Tesla's Autopilot driver-assistance system was involved in far more crashes than previously known, a 'shocking' seventeen fatalities and 736 accidents; in **San Francisco**, a Waymo autonomous vehicle *with a safety driver aboard* 'made contact' with a small dog at 25 miles-per-hour. The dog 'did not survive,' [ArsTechnica](#) reports. [Story](#). [More](#).

Good News/Bad News: Traffic fatalities and serious injuries on city streets in **Austin** have remained relatively flat over the past few years, according to a new city report; but on state-owned roads within the

city, fatal crashes and injuries have substantially increased. Bigger cars and higher speed limits are possible influences. [Story](#). [More](#). [Study](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Bloomberg News says the Federal Reserve will likely pause their year-long, relentless interest rate hikes at this week's June 13-14 meetings, leaving rates in the 5 to 5.25% range while awaiting signs that inflation is retreating. Fed chair Jerome Powell will have to fend off some board members who want more aggressive increases. [Story](#).

Last week's runoff elections in **San Antonio** will send two women to the city council. Political new-comer Sukh Kaur, who will be the council's first member of South Asian descent, and nonprofit executive Martina Alderete Gavito will be sworn in on June 21. [Details](#).

Residents and environmental groups are fighting a 1400-home development near **Bulverde** in **Comal County** that would potentially pump 600,000 gallons per day of treated wastewater into a tributary of the Comal River. The development, called the Harrison Tract subdivision, is proposed for a 500-acre site along Texas 46. [Details](#).

Texas State University in **San Marcos** ranked in the top 6.3% out of 20,531 universities analyzed worldwide by the Center for World University Rankings, using methodology including education quality, alumni employment, quality of faculty, and research performance. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"If a window of opportunity appears, don't pull down the shade."

- Tom Peters

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