



Monday Morning Report

October 11, 2022

Columbus Day Edition

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled to meet November 16 at 2 PM by videoconference. There will not be a meeting in October. For more information, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global cases today are at 622,053,173 with 6,559,019 deaths. US cases are at 96,721,939 with 1,062,696 deaths (10/11/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Yesterday, Texas reported 6,364,150 cases, with 89,344 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 546,327 cases with 6,338 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 29,438 cases, still with 414 deaths; **Comal County**: 25,474 cases, with 566 deaths; **Hays County**: 62,250 cases, with 454 deaths; **Travis County**: 245,833 cases, with 1,797 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 128,722 cases, with 911 deaths (10/10/22). ([TDHHS](#)). *Regional hospitalization-rate data found [here](#).*

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Texas Department of Transportation filed formal Expressions of Interest last week with the Federal Railroad Administration for enhanced or more frequent Amtrak passenger service on multiple Texas corridors, several of which could affect the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor**. Among the requests: expanded service in the IH-35 Texas-Oklahoma Corridor, which now includes **Laredo-San Antonio-Austin-Dallas**; a **Houston-San Antonio** route, and five additional corridors. Rail advocates are already calling for state legislature to set aside \$200 million per year to match federal dollars for the effort. [Story](#). [Advocates Take. TX-OK Study](#).

[Texas Government Insider](#)'s Mary Scott Nabors surveys other robust US spending on transit projects and concludes the flood of federal dollars to transportation will continue flowing for the next few years but surmises that the **Dallas-Houston** bullet train project is probably dead due to a lack of state leadership support. [Opinion](#). [More](#).

The **Austin** Corridor Program Office provided an update last week on the status of the city's pursuit of federal dollars for the IH-35 'Cap and Stitch' effort to re-connect communities divided by the Interstate, including details on an *Our Future 35* study of methods to link transportation networks and equity. Applications are due Oct. 13. [Details](#) (second item down).

That dispute between **Travis** and **Hays Counties** over a proposed expansion of State Highway 45 Southwest went public Sept. 27 at a contentious **Hays County** commissioners court meeting that involved allegations of 'misrepresentation' and worse. **Travis County** says the project creates an IH-35 bypass on Mopac (Loop 1) in **Austin**, increasing traffic; a **Hays County** commissioner says **Kyle** and **Buda** commuters need it. [Story](#).

The nation's third largest railroad workers union voted yesterday to reject a contract settlement lauded earlier by the Biden administration, reopening the possibility of a crippling strike with major implications for the economy and supply chains. Both sides are in fresh talks, with workers remaining on the job for now. [Story](#).

The Texas Transportation Commission voted unanimously late last month to suspend a proposed 8.3% hike in 2023 toll rates for the **Central Texas** Turnpike System (which includes SH 130, a Mopac express lane, and SH 45 North and Southeast. [Details](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

The **San Antonio Express-News** reports that a little-known tax provision passed by the state legislature in 2019 is scoring big tax savings for certain real estate developers - and at a high cost for local governments, including **Travis County, Williamson County, Bexar County, and San Marcos**. Millions are at stake, with no oversight, they report. State leaders are rushing to fix the loophole. (This, you've got to read) [Story](#).

A state court appeals panel has reversed a lower-court decision that had pulled an air quality permit from the proposed 1500-acre Vulcan Minerals quarry in **Comal County** between **New Braunfels** and **Bulverde**. Local opposition groups and leaders are reportedly pondering an appeal to the Texas Supreme Court. [Story](#).

Spirit Airlines has begun daily non-stop service between **Austin** Bergstrom International Airport and **Monterrey**, Mexico ([here](#)); and congratulations to Bergstrom for being named by **The Discoverer** website to a list of the Top Five best US airports for dining. [Story](#).

It is getting harder to buy and sell US treasuries in large quantities without those trades moving markets, **Bloomberg** reports. Market depth, as one measure is known, last week hit its worst level since the height of the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. What's it mean? Possible Federal Reserve intervention, they say. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

- Marcel Proust

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