



Monday Morning Report

October 31, 2022

INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled for November 16 at 2 PM by videoconference. For more information, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global cases today reached 630,292,074 with 6,589,554 deaths. US cases are at 97,453,503 with 1,070,282 deaths (10/31/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Texas was reporting 6,383,260 cases, with 89,577 deaths on Friday, including in **Bexar County**: 548,072 cases with 6,355 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 29,523 cases, with 415 deaths; **Comal County**: 25,559 cases, with 570 deaths; **Hays County**: 62,687 cases, still with 456 deaths; **Travis County**: 246,883 cases, with 1,802 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 129,368 cases, with 917 deaths (10/28/22). ([TDHHS](#)). *Regional hospitalization-rate data found [here](#).*

INFRASTRUCTURE

Capital Metro in **Austin** approved a plan last week to hire over 1000 new employees related to the development of Project Connect, the agency's multi-year, multi-pronged light-rail and transit effort. The Transit Workforce Partnership Work Plan is a three-year contract with Workforce Solutions Capital Area. Details [here](#).

Lawyers for that **Dallas-to-Houston** high speed rail project, Texas Central Railway, insisted last week that the project is not dead despite having recently lost its president and board of directors. Lawyers for landowners along the route are now asking the company to prove it, threatening a lawsuit if Texas Central doesn't immediately produce a plan for financing, building, and operating the system. [Story](#).

The federal government is investing \$5 billion in developing half-a-million electric vehicle charging stations across the US, but the industry admits that a large percentage of existing chargers don't work much of the time, reports [Axios](#). That's in turn creating a new workforce gap: workers trained to fix charging stations. [Story](#).

Get ready for more supply-chain issues: [Loadstar](#), a freight-movement newsletter, reports that new COVID-19 lockdowns in the Chinese cities of **Shanghai**, **Ningbo**, and **Tianjin** are hampering industrial output and disrupting freight shipping - all of which could impact US supply chains in the run-up to the high-demand Christmas season. [Story](#).

Also on the supply-chain front, US importers seeking to avoid congestion at major West Coast shipping gateways (**Los Angeles**, **Long Beach**, **Seattle**, etc.) have shifted to East and Gulf Coast ports instead, which has now made **Houston** one of the most congested ports in the country, ITS Logistics reports [here](#).

The [New York Times](#) reported over the weekend that the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped downtowns all across the US, upending places where density is part of the country's DNA and confronting cities with

rising crime levels, crisis-level housing shortages, and rising racial or class inequities. **Austin** is cited as a city that has thrived amidst the chaos. [Story](#).

Austin's city council takes up a resolution this Thursday (11/3) relating to the need for interlocal collaboration to address potential impacts of the **Hays County** Transportation Plan on the city of **Austin's** Water Quality Protection Lands (which sounds like the proposed State Highway 45 South West expansion project to us). [Livestream](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

There are growing signs that the start-up industry surrounding driverless automobiles is collapsing. Ford- and Volkswagen-backed Argo AI announced earlier this month that it was shuttering operations and seeking new jobs for its 2000 current employees. Roughly \$75 billion has been spent thus far on autonomous automobile research, but automakers are beginning to think the road to success may just be too long and too expensive. [Story](#).

Not everyone is pleased with that \$340,000 **San Antonio** economic development framework and plan approved by the city council earlier this month: some city council members and the **Express-News** continued to raise questions last week about the value of the study, its authors, and its conclusions. [Story](#).

Surface water accounts for roughly half of the existing Texas water supply but climate change has brought higher temperatures that dry soil more quickly, enhancing the effects of drought and causing less rain to flow into the state's rivers and streams. The **Texas Tribune** examines plans to build about twenty-three new reservoirs statewide - and why it probably won't solve looming water shortages. [Story](#).

Texas Government Insider provided a brief profile last week of **Frieberg**, Germany-born **Round Rock** mayor Craig Morgan last week, who maintains the best advice he's yet received is: "You control your attitude and do not let anyone else dictate that." [Link](#).

Thought of the Week

"We act as though comfort and luxury were the chief requirements of life, when all we need to make us happy is something to be enthusiastic about."

- Charles Kingsley

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