



## Monday Morning Report

November 4, 2024

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### INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, November 20 at 2 PM by Zoom. If you would like to add an item to the agenda, please contact [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org).

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

In a lengthy article examining recently revived efforts to develop passenger rail service between **Austin** and **San Antonio** the *Express-News* asks, "Is rail dream real?" What follows is a history of past negotiations with Union Pacific Railroad and a look at the activities of a statewide passenger rail advisory committee formed by **Travis County** judge Andy Brown and **Bexar County** judge Peter Sakai. Asked, but not really answered. [Story](#).

Despite still-pending legal challenges, a groundbreaking ceremony finally took place last week for the \$5.6 billion IH-35 Capital Express Central project in downtown **Austin**. TxDOT chairman J. Bruce Bugg noted that the long-debated project was one of \$56 billion in major highway construction currently underway by TxDOT. [Story](#).

High-speed rail projects are now under construction in California and Nevada and in the planning stages in the Pacific Northwest, the Southeast, and Texas, *SmartCities* reports, in Part One of a three-part series on efforts to create a national high-speed rail network. The article traces the history of high-speed rail back to the Lyndon Johnson administration, but notes that there is still no true high-speed rail anywhere in the US. [Story](#).

Capital Metro will double track about a mile of the Red Line in East **Austin** to improve the frequency and reliability of their commuter service, and add new sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, and another platform at the Plaza Saltillo station. Earlier improvements added tracks between the Lakeline and Leander stations. [Details](#).

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### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Chinese electric-and-hybrid vehicle manufacturer BYD, which already has 30 sales showrooms across Mexico, announced plans for a new factory capable of building 150,000 electric vehicles per year. The company has already surpassed industry leader Tesla to become the world's Number 1 electric vehicle manufacturer. [Story](#).

The *Washington Post* reports that sodium-ion batteries are emerging as a cheaper, more environmentally - and geopolitically - sustainable alternative to the lithium-ion batteries that currently power most electric vehicles. Last month, Natron Energy announced that it would open a

'gigafactory' in North Carolina to produce enough sodium-ion batteries to charge 24,000 electric vehicles. Some experts doubt the technology will replace lithium. [Story](#).

A new study showing that the 14-year-old private sector workforce development program Project Quest in **San Antonio** has posted a return on investment of 234% - with an average cost of \$16,000 per client - is raising questions about the city-funded Ready to Work effort, which has struggled to prove its cost-effectiveness. [Story](#).

The IH-35 Capital Express Central project that kicked off last week will consume 54-downtown acres - forcing out more than 100 homeowners and businesses - but the **Austin Monitor** also notes the project's impact on the city's bat population beneath bridges along the route, which will also be forced to relocate. [Story](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"Most of the important things in the world have been accomplished by people who have kept on trying when there seemed to be no hope at all."*

- Dale Carnegie

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