



Monday Morning Report

December 12, 2022

INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is tentatively scheduled for December 21 at 2 PM by videoconference.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global cases are at 649,213,741 this morning, with 6,653,291 deaths. US cases will reach 100 million later this month, currently at 99,417,644 with 1,084,450 deaths (12/12/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Texas statewide reporting was unavailable today, but Friday's numbers included in **Bexar County:** 553,312 cases with 6,379 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 29,756 cases, still with 416 deaths; **Comal County:** 25,833 cases, still with 573 deaths; **Hays County:** 63,770 cases, with 459 deaths; **Travis County:** 250,204 cases, with 1,809 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 131,1627 cases, with 920 deaths (12/7/22). ([TDHHS](#)). *Regional hospitalization-rate data found [here](#).*

INFRASTRUCTURE

The full implications may be decades away, but the Department of Energy is expected to announce tomorrow that scientists have achieved a key milestone toward the Holy Grail of energy generation: zero-carbon power through nuclear fusion, the [Washington Post](#) reports. Beyond the climate benefits, backers say it will bring cheap energy to impoverished parts of the world. [Story](#).

A \$100 billion plan to improve rail service in the Northeast Corridor from **Washington DC** to **Boston** is calling new attention to the extraordinarily high cost of developing train infrastructure in the US. **Paris** is building similar expansions for half as much in half the time, [Vice](#) reports, citing US problems of over-design, poor contractor oversight, poor inter-agency coordination, and viewing infrastructure as jobs programs. [Story](#).

San Antonio - the largest city in the nation without some form of rail transit - has a new group trying to change that, San Antonians for Rail Transit. The organization was formed by former **New York** resident Jesse Harasta and currently boasts about 70 members dedicating themselves to a public information campaign aimed at bringing more than bus-only transit to Alamo City. [Story](#).

Brightline - the hyper-active passenger rail service provider operating out of Florida - announced last week that it could begin construction by next year on an \$8-billion high-speed passenger line between **Las Vegas** and **Los Angeles**, a private-sector initiative that could remove 3 million cars a year from the I-15 Corridor. [Story](#).

The National Defense Authorization Act, a must-pass bill approved in **Washington** last week, contains \$34 billion for the so-called 'Ike Dike,' an offshore mega-project to protect **Houston**, **Galveston**, and other coastal communities from the kind of ocean storm surges that did billions of dollars in damage during Hurricane Ike. [Story](#). [More](#).

An **Atlanta**-based charter bus company launched in **Austin** and **San Antonio** last week with 160 buses and already some big-name customers, including the University of Texas, HEB, Apple, and Amazon. The

company provides two bus-types, 15-20 passengers & larger 35-55 groups on a scheduled or per trip basis. [Details](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

The fallout continues to rain down from **San Antonio**-based Rackspace's tech problems. Officials admitted last week that the loss of data - including emails for thousands of angry customers ([here](#)) - was the result of a ransomware attack, as yet unresolved. [Story](#). [Opinion](#).

Scary: **Market Watch** reports that home foreclosure rates were up 57% year-over-year in November, with over 20,000 properties entering the foreclosure process. Neither **Austin** nor **San Antonio** were included in the hardest-hit cities, but **Houston** ranked high in cities over a million in population. [Story](#).

Houston DID get some good news last week, however, ranking as one of the world's best cities to live in - according to Reasonance, a tourism consulting firm - outpacing both **Austin** and **San Antonio**, with **London** ranking number one. [Details](#).

A story datelined out of **Washington** says Texas is lagging behind other parts of the country in electric vehicle sales, with just 4.3% of car purchases being electric models last year compared to California's 19%. Number one issue: drivers' range anxiety, according to data firm Atlas Public Policy. [Story](#).

It's not easy being a Rocket Man. While the **American-Statesman** renamed **Austin** as 'Musklandia' in a gushing, wide-ranging survey of local business activity by the world's richest man ([here](#)), the folks in **San Francisco** were not-so-much impressed: Elon Musk was loudly booed at a Dave Chapelle stadium show, according to video quickly removed by Twitter. [Story](#).

Austin's energy and environmental activists' community is mourning the loss of the amazing Shudde Fath at age 106. A civic presence and board member of the Electric Utility Commission for decades, Fath will be remembered in a ceremony this Sunday. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"The bad news: There is no shortcut to success. The good news is, it's doable."

- Don Santo

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