



Monday Morning Report

December 19, 2022

INTERNAL

There being no urgent pressing business - and with Christmas just a few days away - the Chairman and staff have decided to move this week's previously scheduled Executive Committee meeting (12/21) of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council to Wednesday, Jan. 18, 2023. This also coincides with our annual break for the **Monday Morning Report**, which will return after the first of the year. **Happy Holidays to all.**

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global cases this morning are at 653,184,231, with 6,665,931 deaths. US cases have reached 9,892,545 with 1,087,410 deaths (12/19/22) (**Johns Hopkins**). On Friday Texas reported 18,021 new cases for the week and with 88 new deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 554,855 cases with 6,384 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 29,832 cases, with 417 deaths; **Comal County**: 25,952 cases, still with 573 deaths; **Hays County**: 64,043 cases, with 460 deaths; **Travis County**: 251,290 cases, with 1,811 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 131,643 cases, with 920 deaths (12/15/22). (**TDHHS**). *Regional hospitalization-rate data found [here](#).*

INFRASTRUCTURE

US leaders risk squandering a generational uptick in billions of federal infrastructure spending - from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the Inflation Reduction Act, and the CHIPS Science Act - if they don't use this opportunity to focus on the nation's 'cracking foundation' of the current workforce, the **Brookings Institute** says. Their report aims to equip policymakers with data to better target, measure, and address infrastructure workforce needs and includes a downloadable toolkit appendix. **Story. Report. Toolkit.**

Amtrak's first new rail cars, scheduled to replace the current 50-year-old fleet, are nearly finished with the design phase and are entering production in **Sacramento**, CA. Part of a \$7.5 billion plan to modernize its fleet, primarily for the **Northeast Corridor**, the Amtrak Airo vehicles feature varied power platforms, panoramic windows, more comfortable seating, onboard WiFi, USB ports, and redesigned cafe cars. **Story. Video.**

Austin's city council voted to allocate \$1.5 million last week to the IH-35 'Cap and Stitch' project, which would develop new public space atop the rebuilt Central Texas Expressway through downtown. The funds will go toward design and engineering expenses related to the project. **Story. Timeline.**

A key CPS Energy committee in **San Antonio** recommends placing a heavy bet on natural gas over the next decade and ending coal-fired electric generation within the next six years, local media reports. Climate activists aren't all happy, but agency officials said the plan balanced a mix of political and economic choices. **Story.**

Last week's announcement in **Washington** of a historic scientific breakthrough on fusion energy generation sparked a lot of optimism, but a few caution signals are emerging. A writer for the

Atlantic says the transition to clean, renewable energy is only partly an engineering problem, but mostly a political/regulatory one. [Opinion](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

National news brand **Axios** hasn't started publishing a **San Antonio** local version (yet) but Alamo City readers might nonetheless also be interested in the **Axios Austin** list of the '10 Most Influential People in Austin' list, which includes a high tech banker, a female software start-up leader, some entrepreneurs, and a restaurateur. [Story](#).

Although banned by regulators from providing service to its own hometown, **Austin**-based Tesla Energy - a subsidiary of you-know-who - has begun selling retail electricity in some Texas communities using technology provided by its Powerwall energy products. The service includes buy-sell interface with the state's grid. [Story](#).

In town for a conference last week, the No. 2 civilian official in the US Army doubled down on the agency's commitment to **Austin** as headquarters for the Army Futures Command, a four-year-old effort to modernize the nation's armed services via technology, which employs 2400 in four local facilities. [Story](#).

Water managers for the dwindling southwest Colorado River, meeting in **Las Vegas** last week, went to Def Con One by declaring that water supplies to farmers and urban dwellers must necessarily be reduced to avoid pumping infrastructure failures that could make a bad current situation even worse in the future. [Story](#). [More](#).

Hats off to musician Randy Rogers and family for a hefty \$100,000 Christmas-time contribution to the **Comal County** Crisis Center in **New Braunfels**. The Center provides counseling, sheltering, victim advocacy, and transportation services to those suffering abuse. [Story](#). [Website](#). (if you, too, want to contribute).

Texas Monthly, in a year-end gut punch to their hometown headquarters, named **Austin** as the 'Bum Steer of the Year' due to traffic, housing costs, chain restaurants, electric scooters, taxes, rich people, in a nutshell: "Austin is too expensive to be as bland as it has become." Well, yes, there *is* a bull involved here. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love."

- Hamilton Wright Mabie

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