



Monday Morning Report

March 25, 2019

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council met last Wednesday (3/20) in **San Marcos** for status reports on various projects and to hear a presentation from TxDOT's Jonathan Bean on the billion-dollar plus IH-35 NEX project for Interstate 35 in **San Antonio**. The revised project plans include three new elevated lanes in each direction, with one slated for eventual High Occupancy Vehicle or autonomous vehicle use. See the agenda [here](#).

Important Venue Change: The upcoming April 17th Five-Year Strategic Planning workshop scheduled for the Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council's Executive committee has been moved to the Hilton Garden Inn, 2131 N IH 35 San Marcos ([map](#)). Former San Antonio mayor and former HUD Secretary Henry Cisneros will be joining us to offer his perspective on the founding of the Corridor Council. Seating is limited, but you may RSVP [here](#).

As a part of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council's Five-Year Strategy Planning process, we are asking those interested to complete a brief survey about the organization and identifying various elements that may assist in our efforts on behalf of infrastructure and economic development in the region. You can help by visiting and participating in the web-based survey here:

<https://www.surveymoz.com/s3/4901908/Corridor-Council-Strategic-Plan-Survey>

Thank you for your assistance!

INFRASTRUCTURE

TxDOT will hold a pre-solicitation meeting on the Interstate 35 Capital Express projects April 18, 2-5 pm, in **Austin**, where the agency will lay out the plans, specifications, and estimates for the Capital Express North, South, and Central projects. The meeting will feature a brief overview of the solicitation and selection process, pre-certification work categories, timelines, and the contract's scope. [Details](#). (halfway down left column)

The **Wall Street Journal** is reporting that an elevated 20-mile light rail line in **Honolulu** may have the most expensive cost overruns ever recorded for a major transit project, currently \$4 billion over an original estimate of \$5.1 billion. Poor planning and design, environmental issues, and a flawed procurement process - that required over 100 contracts to be re-negotiated - all contributed to 'crucial missteps.' A grand jury is investigating, the federal government has quit financing the venture, and it may now never reach downtown. [Story](#).

'Levels of Service' - LOS - have been the barometer for measuring driver satisfaction and through-put on the nation's highways since the 1960's. A-through-F grading has been used to justify ever-wider freeways, even when 'peak hour' congestion may just prevail for a few hours a day. The results are ever-larger projects under-utilized much of time yet that cost more and more to build and maintain. "The irony of the LOS system is that it hasn't solved congestion at all...LOS keeps making traffic worse." **The Avenue** suggests junking LOS for good. [Opinion](#).

Austin city manager Spencer Cronk continues building his new management team, most recently adding two assistant city managers, Rey Arrellano and Gina Fiandaca, to oversee the city's Safety and Mobility Project. Arrellano is a from-within city management hire; Fiandaca was a commissioner with **Boston's** Transportation Department. [Details](#).

US Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao announced the creation earlier this month (in **Austin**, at South By Southwest) of a new national Non-Traditional and Emerging Transportation Technology Council to 'identify and resolve jurisdictional and regulatory gaps' that may impede the deployment of new technologies such as tunneling, hyperloop, autonomous and other innovations. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and 'Other' News)

An outside consultant told a **San Antonio** city council committee last week that former city manager Sheryl Sculley's salary was in line with payments made in a peer group of city managers across the country. Before she stepped down from her position, Sculley's salary had been the subject of controversy and featured in at least one local election's results. But the consultant's study showed her \$475,000 salary was 'right at market,' just 5% above average for peer cities. [Story](#).

Private car ownership declined globally last year and one **New York Times** columnist predicted last week that the trend will continue, writing: "Consider how quickly people moved from physical maps to map apps, from snail mail to email, from prime time TV to watching on demand...Long-held practices were quickly replaced by digital tools that made things easier, more convenient and simply better." [Opinion](#).

Austin made a list that nobody wants to be on earlier this month: GasBuddy's list in **USA Today** of the 'Ten US Cities With The Most Aggressive Drivers.' The website pegged **Austin** at number nine, just before Number 10, **Las Vegas**. Auto-centric **Los Angeles** was ranked Number One. [Story](#).

That iconic Snake Farm in **New Braunfels**, around since the 1960's, is getting a new name, new animals, and some new space. Animal World and Snake Farm Zoo has purchased 20 adjacent acres, built new and more natural enclosures for its animals, and plans to double in size over the next few years. An update your kids and grandkids will appreciate [here](#).

Thought of the Week

"For everything you have missed, you have gained something else."
- Ralph Waldo Emerson

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