



Monday Morning Report

Memorial Day Edition

May 28, 2019

INTERNAL

The next meeting of the Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council is set for Wednesday, June 19, 2:00 pm, at the Council offices in **San Marcos**. An agenda will be forthcoming.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Politico reports that US mayors and city councils are taking a new approach to fighting gridlock, following the examples of diverse cities from **London** to **Singapore** to **Seattle**. They list five lessons learned and a surprise: More people doesn't have to mean more cars; people will fund mass transit - when it works; transportation and housing are really the same issue; congestion taxes spur productivity; it is possible to ban cars from some places at some times. For the surprise, you'll have to go [here](#).

After California whittled down its high speed rail project aimed at connecting **Los Angeles** to **San Francisco**, the Trump administration vowed to claw back about \$1 billion committed to the project by the Federal government ([here](#)). Now, California has sued over the issue and the Trump administration has reportedly agreed not to de-obligate the funds pending the outcome of the lawsuit. [Story](#). The USDOT, meanwhile, announced the availability of over \$900 million in additional rail grants earlier this month.

[Details](#).

An open house in **Austin** last week revealed just how much progress, and how fast, plans are developing for Capital Metro's Orange and Blue high capacity transit lines. The Blue line will run east/west from Bergstrom airport along Riverside Drive to downtown and onward to the University of Texas campus; the Orange line runs roughly north/south on or near Lamar Boulevard. Both will operate in dedicated transit-only lanes already approved by the city council. [Story](#).

Building more affordable housing would appear to be the simplest solution - along with more public transit - to affordability issues that both **Austin** and **San Antonio** confront, since housing and transportation costs take the largest slice of the average family's budget. But a **New York Times** columnist argued this week that it is progressives who are blocking zoning changes that could solve both problems in California.

[Opinion](#).

The US Postal Service began shipping mail by self-driving trucks on the long-hall route between **Phoenix** and **Dallas** last week, the beginning of a two-week trial pilot program. Their partner on the project, **San Diego**-based TuSimple, says a safety engineer and driver will be aboard to monitor the truck during testing. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and 'Other' News)

It's that time of year when the Census Bureau issues population data changes from the previous year and, no surprise, **Austin, San Antonio, New Braunfels, Round Rock** and **Georgetown** all made it into the Top 10 for fastest growth for Texas cities ([list](#)). Interestingly, but also not surprising, suburban counties in the Corridor grew faster than urban counties ([details](#)). And **New Braunfels** remained the second fastest-growing city in the US (above 50,000 population) for the second year in a row, adding about 15 people per day. [Story](#).

An economic study released last week would seem to buttress efforts to build a 71-mile long artificial barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico to protect from storm surges three counties along Galveston Bay - **Galveston, Harris, and Chambers**. Proposed by the Texas General Land Office, this 'mother of all infrastructure projects' would prevent nearly \$1 trillion in potential losses, says Texas A&M University at **Galveston**. More [here](#).

The **Austin** city council approved a \$1.2 billion expansion of the city's Convention Center last week. It's taken nearly four years to reach consensus on the project and mayor Steve Adler said, "It's a big deal on many levels." [Story](#).

City Public Services in **San Antonio** is sponsoring half-day conference called '[Plug Me In: Smart. Connected. Electrified](#)' on Wednesday, June 19, from 7 am to 1:30 pm. Advanced electrification, smart cities, and infrastructure readiness are all on the agenda. [Details](#).

[Calling All Dogs](#): Agility Robotics has partnered with Ford Motor Company to deploy up to 100 self-driving vehicles bearing walking, upright robots to deliver packages as early as next year. [Details](#).

The **Austin** Chamber of Commerce's annual 2019 Federal Advocacy Trip to **Washington DC** is scheduled June 24-26, with a delegation led by Elizabeth Christian. On tap: House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and support for the Army Futures Command Center. [Details](#).

A new study from a **Washington**-based think tank aims to provide local leaders with tools to shape their communities to fit into the rapidly changing domestic and global economies. Using data-driven 'complexity maps,' the report shows how to develop a capability-based approach to regional economic competitiveness. Their methodology includes having local firms specify the inputs they need to be productive and how cities become more resilient as they invest in those inputs. [Study](#).

Thought of the Week

"Patriotism is supporting your country all the time, and your government when it deserves it."

- Mark Twain

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