



Monday Morning Report

July 23, 2018

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council's Executive Committee met last week in **San Marcos** to discuss planning efforts for IH-35 from **Georgetown** to **San Antonio**, upcoming events on autonomous vehicles and land use, progress on a study underway by TxDOT and the two regional metropolitan planning agencies of Interstate 35, and a proposed coalition of Corridor mayors. For details, email council@thecorridor.org.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Work was completed last week on the North **Tarrant County** Expressway (IH-35 West) in **Fort Worth**, a \$1.6 billion project that local officials said could not have been complete without a tolled component. Michael Morris, transportation director of the North Central Texas Council of Governments, used the occasion to predict the Legislature would reinstate toll projects statewide and to support the \$8 billion IH-35 upgrade through **Austin**. "That project cannot be done without tolls," he said. [Story](#).

Capital Metro in **Austin** begins two weeks of testing autonomous (driverless) buses in downtown tonight along a roughly one-mile route on Third Street. The tests are part of a year-long pilot program with a private sector partner. [Details](#).

The US Environmental Protection Agency declared **Bexar County** to be a 'non-attainment area' for air quality purposes last week (7/18), potentially igniting a series of actions that could have widespread repercussions for years on transportation and economic development projects in **San Antonio**. County Judge Nelson Wolff fired back immediately, saying "The EPA ignored a long track record of improving air quality in **Bexar County**." He told the Rivard Report that he was 'extremely disappointed' by the decision. [Story](#).

A lot of major city transit systems are looking hopefully at proposed hyperloop projects (**Chicago**, **Los Angeles**) and still more cities are delaying decisions on large transportation infrastructure investments hoping to 'future-proof' such investments against newer, rapidly developing technologies. **Dallas** and **Fort Worth** have been considering the feasibility of a hyperloop system to connect the two cities, but the **Dallas Morning News** is advising local governments in **North Texas** to steer clear: they say trains are a better fit. [Editorial](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and 'Other' News)

The first new presidential Air Force One planes to be built in more than 30 years will be constructed in **San Antonio** under a \$3.9 billion contract let to Boeing, the Air Force announced last week. Two planes will be built under the contract and they'll be painted, what else, red, white and blue. [Details](#).

Plans by the Port of **Corpus Christi** to build a seawater desalination plant as a source for fresh water have set off a war of words with the nearby fishing village of **Port Aransas**, where the envisioned facility would be built. The permitting process for such plants is lengthy, port officials say, and they just want to get the process started. Similar desalinization projects have been proposed to treat subsurface brine water in the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor. [Details.](#)

The Association of American Railroads is placing 'sponsored content' in a number of national publications called *'The Digitization of An Industrial Giant: How Technology is Revolutionizing Freight Rail and Keeping America's Economy Moving.'* The package traces rail industry statistics and trends and highlights improvements that are transforming operations for 'gig economy' enterprises. [Report.](#)

Big changes could be coming to **Austin's** planning and development requirements, and we're not even talking about Code Next - the zoning re-write sparking petition drives and court cases. No, this stems from new federal data on **Austin**-area rainfall patterns, which could change the 100-year flood plain maps to include larger areas at risk of flash floods. [Story.](#)

The North **San Antonio** Chamber of Commerce has a new chief executive officer: Christina Aldrete, who had previously served as an executive vice president. [Details.](#)

A few weeks ago we told you about **Austin** writer Ken Herman asking 'Is it just me, or do Austinites not go to **San Antonio** very often?' Turns out, it was just *him*. [Story.](#)

Thought of the Week

"Life consists not in holding good cards but in playing those you hold well."

- Josh Billings

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