



Monday Morning Report

January 13, 2020

INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council's Executive Committee is on Wednesday, February 19, 2:00 pm at the Corridor Council offices, 304 North C.M. Allen Parkway, in **San Marcos**. To RSVP or add an item to the agenda, email council@thecorridor.org.

INFRASTRUCTURE

More on regional population growth: The Census Bureau says the latest numbers show the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor's** combined population (for the two Metropolitan Statistical Areas) reached just over 4.5 million people in 2018, having doubled in the last 20 years. **San Marcos** and **New Braunfels** are, once again, among the fastest-growing cities of their size in the nation. Most demographers believe regional population will roughly double again in the next 20 years to over 8 million people. For details, the **San Antonio** numbers are [here](#). An **Austin** analysis is [here](#).

Governor Greg Abbott said in **San Antonio** last week (1/8) that the current major round of 'building out' Texas roads may be the last such major expenditures for highways, citing changing technologies such as Uber-like ride sharing: "The way people get around, the way people live is going to change." He suggested that Texans should be proud of traffic congestion because it means more people want to live in Texas. Public transit, he said following his speech, is the purview of local governments. [Story](#).

Other states, meanwhile, are doubling down on public transit in the form of rail. Virginia just announced a \$3.7 billion plan to develop passenger rail routes, primarily into **Washington DC**. New intercity and commuter train service could begin as early as this year; rail advocates and environmentalists called the plan a 'game-changer.' [Story](#).

The **Austin Business Journal**, in a story on the **Dallas-Houston** Texas Central Railway high speed rail project, wonders if something similar could be on the horizon for Central Texas. They say construction on the Texas Central project will begin this year, although court battles over legal authorities and right-of-way acquisition - not to mention \$17 billion in yet-to-be-defined financing - would seem to make that unlikely. [Story](#).

Some toll rates in the **Austin** area went up at the first of the year on 183A Toll, 290 Toll, 71 Toll Lane, and the MoPac Express Lane, but the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority want people to know that the increases (\$.02-.06 cents) are only a 1.76% increase, consistent with the Consumer Price Index. [Details](#).

Just weeks after winning a city contract to provide e-scooters to **San Antonio** streets the **San Francisco**-based company Lime announced that it was pulling out of the Alamo City market, citing low ridership and high city franchise fees. It is also withdrawing from **Atlanta**, **Phoenix**, **San Diego** and other markets in Europe and Latin America. [Story](#).

Long-time **Austin** transit advocate (and former Capital Metro board member) Lyndon Henry had an opinion piece in the **San Antonio** newspaper last week questioning the city's move towards Bus Rapid

Transit, as opposed to light rail, as a tool for future mobility needs. Henry essentially makes a cost-benefit argument that light rail, with higher capital costs, has lower long-term costs yet yields higher land use (tax base development) benefits. [Opinion](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and 'Other' News)

Business Insider, in a status report on the development of the self-driving car industry, says that Tesla, Waymo, and General Motors are locked in an investment-driven battle over the future of a potential multi-trillion-dollar market. They note that the promise of true autonomous vehicles has shifted from a near-term goal to a long, incremental development scenario. [Story](#).

The US Department of Transportation in **Washington** has developed an interactive map that displays national transportation infrastructure in relation to Opportunity Zones for economic development designated in the 2017 Tax Cut and Jobs Act. Ideally, though there have been some accusations of wealthy investors taking advantage of the program, the Opportunity Zones are economically distressed areas approved by governors and the US Treasury. [Story](#). [Map](#).

Get ready for the 54th Annual Texas Legislative Conference in **New Braunfels**, scheduled this year for March 26-27. The Conference honors former Apollo 16 astronaut Charlie Duke as the Texan of the Year. [Details](#). [Register](#).

The taxi business is down 75% to the **Los Angeles** airport since Uber began service in 2012, according to the local transportation department, and this year the city plans to change a local franchise system that has been in place since the 1990's. Currently, the taxi fleet is limited to just 2,361 cabs compared to more than 100,000 Uber and Lyft operators. One study showed 10% of taxicabs drive *twice* the miles really needed for trips. [Story](#).

The **San Antonio Express-News** is running an excellent multi-media series entitled 'Texas Power Brokers,' profiling - you guessed it - statewide business leaders from Alamo City. In a recent episode, entrepreneur Graham Weston talked about the regional tech world: "**Austin** innovates, **San Antonio** executes," he says. [Stories](#).

Responding to a federal deadline, Gov. Greg Abbott told the State Department in **Washington** last week that Texas would not participate in the US refugee resettlement program this fiscal year - one day after Texas House Democrats urged him to opt into the program. Citing workforce shortages in the construction and service industries, the Democrats pointed to a 2015 study indicating that immigrants contributed \$4.6 billion to the state's economy and paid \$1.6 billion in taxes. [Story](#).

Need a ride between **Austin** and **San Antonio**? Ride sharing start-up Hitch has begun offering an Uber-style service between central locations in the two cities via a phone-based app. Sign up for a 7 am - to 7 pm ride to join a queue that will match you with other passengers headed to the same destination, all for \$20. **Houston-Dallas** rides are also available. [Story](#). [Get the app](#).

Thought of the Week

"It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan."

- Eleanor Roosevelt

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