



Monday Morning Report

January 25, 2021

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council will next meet on Wednesday, February 17, at 2:00 pm via Zoom video conference. For questions or to add an item to the agenda, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global confirmed cases will reach 100 million by later this week, up another 5 million since last week. As of this morning global, cases stood at 99,275,637 with 2,131,079 deaths (1/25/21). The US death total so far is 419,228, with just over 25 million confirmed cases. (*Johns Hopkins*) Texas was reporting 1,960,061 cases as of yesterday, with 34,322 deaths. **Bexar County:** 2,153 fatalities, with 133,295 confirmed cases; **Guadalupe County:** 8,226 cases with 139 deaths; **Comal County:** 4,229 cases with 211 deaths; **Hays County:** 13,915 cases with 140 deaths; **Travis County:** 64,658 cases with 681 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 28,979 cases with 291 deaths (1/24/21). (*TDHHS*)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation creates one-third of US greenhouse gas emissions and incoming Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg vowed last week during Congressional hearings in **Washington** that addressing climate change would be his top priority. But how, exactly? Rethinking transportation grants, making states measure emissions, mandating cleaner vehicles, more spending on public transit, and tougher new laws are options being discussed. *Story*.

The National Parks Service announced last month that they will partner with the Great Springs Project to build a one hundred-miles long series of trails connecting **San Antonio** Springs, **Comal** Springs, **San Marcos** Springs, and Barton Springs in **Austin**, with a goal of protecting 50,000 acres of National Park Land over the Edwards Aquifer. Congratulations to Garry Merritt, CEO of Great Springs, and learn more [here](#).

Two academics from the University of Texas in **Austin** say the time has come for electric vehicles to pay their fair share for Texas highways, urging legislative support for House Bill 427, which would impose a fee (\$200) on battery-powered and (\$100) and hybrid vehicles. *Opinion*.

Microsoft is now also in the self-driving automobile race. General Motors announced last week that the software giant led a new \$2 billion financing for their Cruise project, which is developing driverless versions of the Chevy Bolt electric vehicle in California, bringing valuation of the company to over \$30 billion. Along with the investment came news that Microsoft would become Cruise and General Motors' cloud computing partner. *Story*.

The hope that "Amtrak Joe" will spark a 21st century rail revolution in the US may seem far-fetched, but a story datelined out of **Deer Lodge**, Montana surveys the current status and outlook for long-distance passenger rail service under the Biden administration, particularly in the Pacific Northwest. **Chicago**, **Minneapolis**, and **Salt Lake City** plans are also discussed. *Story*.

SH 130 Concession Company, which operates a privately-owned 41-mile section of State Highway 130, has a new chief executive, according to the **Lockhart Post-Register**. Doug Wilson, formerly of **Hampton Roads**, Va. will replace Tyler Duvall, who steps up to chairman of the company's board. [Details](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

The flood of good economic development news for **Austin** just keeps coming. **Bloomberg News** revealed Friday that multi-faceted Asian manufacturer Samsung is in discussions with **Travis County** about building a \$10 billion advanced logic chip plant near its existing 250-acre, 3,000 employee semiconductor site. [Story](#). [More](#).

What is Apple up to in the self-driving auto space? They didn't invent the cell phone or the music player, but their iPhones and iPods revolutionized those markets and built a corporate juggernaut. They've sent mixed signals about a potential iCar or ride-hailing service, but **Axios** says recent developments may give clues to their plans. [Story](#).

When officials begin rolling out the results of the most contentious Census in memory later this year, experts surveyed by **The Hill** expect it to show: US population growth is slowing; white population is shrinking, minority population is exploding; the 'baby bust' is worsening; boomers are 'boomeranging' back to their parents; people are less mobile than in the past; and serious under-counts are likely. [Story](#).

Thinking of starting a podcast? Think again. The top 1% of podcasts get 99% of downloads, **Axios Media Trends** reports, and very few actually make a profit. Despite major investments from nearly every big media player, and despite projected 2024 revenue of more than \$1.4 billion, a workable business model for podcasts has yet to emerge, though the future may be brighter. [Story](#).

When Texas State University in **San Marcos** requested a video presentation from **Austin-San Antonio** Congressional representative Lloyd Doggett for an Inauguration Day event last week and then omitted it from the day's program, a somewhat predictable kerfuffle developed ([here](#)). If wondering what you missed, here's the [video](#).

Thought of the Week

"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."

— George Bernard Shaw

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