



Monday Morning Report

February 3, 2020

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled to meet 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

Former **Williamson County** commissioner (and founding Executive Committee member of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council) Mike Heiligenstein is stepping down as executive director of the **Austin**-area Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority. Heiligenstein has played a critical role in shaping regional toll road development for more than 16 years and received a long list of tributes to his career [here](#).

Bob Rivard is questioning the results of a survey released last month suggesting that 65% of **San Antonio** voters would support likely support shifting an eighth-of-a-cent in sales taxes away from aquifer protection/greenway trails development to support a funding increase to VIA Metropolitan Transit for improved bus service. The **Rivard Report** says a more definitive plan for aquifer protection and a broader public outreach campaign is needed. [Opinion](#). The publication announced their own poll this morning, partnering with local KSAT television station. [More](#).

The risk of a wildfire disaster is 'obvious,' a team of California fire veterans concluded last week during a survey trip to **Austin**. Their sobering assessment was based on the proximity of housing built directly amidst combustible grasses and trees, frequent high temperatures and high winds, and the geography of hilly topography - particularly in the western part of **Travis County**. They recommended thinning vegetation and developing evacuation routes and 'safe zones.' [Story](#).

While it may be fine for Californians to visit for a wildfire assessment (see above), Texans don't want any more Californians moving here - at least according to **The Atlantic** magazine - and infecting Texas politics with Left Coast ideas. They cite a Twitter statement from Gov. Greg Abbott: "Remember those high taxes, burdensome regulations, & socialistic agenda advanced in CA? We don't believe in that." More on the 'California Exodus' supposedly sweeping the country [here](#).

The US House of Representatives committees charged with overseeing infrastructure released a framework for \$760 billion in investments last week in **Washington**. The proposed measure (with no bill language yet) would presumably reflect a Democratic vision of highway, transit, and other infrastructure plans over the next five years. The White House has not yet responded to the plan. [Press Release](#) (and related links).

A **New York** technology firm claimed last week that, based upon their study of six relevant factors, **San Antonio** tied **Houston** and **Los Angeles** for the worst traffic congestion travel times in the nation. The 2020 report, based upon US Census Bureau data from 2018, doesn't even mention **Austin** in the top 25 Worst Commutes. Plenty of people disputed the methodology employed. [Story](#). [Study](#).

Uber began testing self-driving vehicle for their ride-sharing service last week in **Washington DC**, although for the time being all cars will feature a human 'safety' operator. The company said it is collecting data for a larger self-driving fleet deployment later. [Story](#).

Demographic changes shaping one of the fastest-growing cities in the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor (and the nation) have led the **New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung** to launch a multi-part series this morning on how local officials intend to deal with new routes and new means of transportation for the city. Read the first part [here](#).

The **San Antonio** Mobility Coalition announced a new event in their Transportation Leadership Luncheon Series. The luncheon on *The State of Freight Infrastructure In Our Region* will take place at the Omni Colonnade on March 5 at 11:30. More information [here](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Hats off to **Austin**'s Dell Foundation for putting up \$100 million to support University of Texas lower income students over the next ten years, an extension of the foundation's Dell Scholars Program. It's the third-largest private donation in UT's history. [Details](#).

San Antonio is among the top five US cities with unmet consumer demand for direct flights to **London, Paris, Frankfurt** and other destinations in Europe, according to Brian Pratte, chief air service development administrator for San Antonio International Airport. Demand for a **Frankfurt** flight is highest, officials said, announcing that they've commissioned a survey of international business travelers in an effort to convince airlines to provide European service. Expect the results next week. [Details](#).

The city and the **San Antonio** Spurs have formed a \$1 million partnership to invest in parks and basketball courts in a new program called "PlaySA." It's a four-year program aimed at renovations for local recreational spots. [Details](#).

Tax increment financing works. That's the conclusion reached by a city of **Austin** study of the old Bergstrom Airport site revitalized into the Mueller housing and retail development east of IH-35. The report finds that all of the goals originally set for the project had been met - except for one that required the implementation of a light rail line connection. [Story](#).

What do you do with a \$218 million Boeing Dreamliner jet if you can't afford it? In **Mexico City** last week, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador suggested a raffle to get rid of the country's Air Force One - which he refuses to fly because it symbolizes the 'wealth and corruption' of former regimes. Mexican social media wags are having a field day with the concept. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while he gets to know something."

- Wilson Mizner

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