



Monday Morning Report

February 16, 2021

Presidents' Day Edition

INTERNAL

Due to the severe weather, we are CANCELING tomorrow's slated Executive Committee meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council. Our power, telephone, and internet services are all either out or intermittent and unreliable. We will re-schedule when it warms up. Thanks for your understanding. Questions? Email council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: As of this morning, confirmed global cases are now 109,246,204, with 2,410,455 deaths (2/16). The US death total is 486,334 with 27,695,365 confirmed cases. (*Johns Hopkins*) Texas was reporting 2,225,399 cases as of yesterday, with 40,593 deaths. **Bexar County:** 2,687 fatalities, with 158,538 confirmed cases; **Guadalupe County:** 9,813 cases with 179 deaths; **Comal County:** 4,671 cases with 252 deaths; **Hays County:** 15,837 cases with 172 deaths; **Travis County:** 73,538 cases with 805 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 34,527 cases with 372 deaths (2/15/21). (*TDHHS*)

INFRASTRUCTURE

It's That Time of Year Again: The American Society of Civil Engineers has released its annual 'report card' on infrastructure, Texas version, and the teacher is not happy. The state's highways, roads, and dams received a D+ from the group, which said roads alone need an additional \$15 billion per year investment. About 1/5 of the state's 567 miles of levees are at risk of failure, endangering \$127 billion worth of property, said the report card. *Story.*

San Antonio has signed a no-cost deal with Blink Charging to install 140 electric car battery chargers throughout the city at 32 sites on city-owned properties. The deal was not without a few hiccups, due to some shareholder and short-sellers suits challenging the company's white-hot stock valuations. Blink will split charging operations revenues with the city after it recovers initial costs. *Story.*

Katy Freeway in **Houston**, reportedly the widest freeway in the world, has 26-lanes including access roads so, theoretically, it should be one of the least-congested roadways anywhere, right? In fact, it's one of the top two most-congested roadways in the US and a new video from VOX-TV shows why: the more capacity **Houston** adds to the motorway, the more motorists show up to use it. *Story.*

President Biden met in **Washington** last week with a bi-partisan group of US Senators and Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg to kick off discussions of his \$2 trillion infrastructure spending plan, with a target passage date later this year. And in **Dallas**, the *Morning News* thinks the private sector should get a big piece of that infrastructure spending. *Story. Opinion.*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Bloomberg News has decided that Texas is the new Silicon Valley and has unleashed that notion into the world in a piece entitled "*Silicon Valley Won't Last Forever and Texas Knows It*," a survey of innovation

hubs over the last century. The piece links the Lone Star State's pattern of technology development since the 1950's (think Texas Instruments) to today's tech-bent universities such as **Austin's** UT and **Houston's** Rice. [Story](#).

Tesla may begin producing its Semi trucks with a 300-mile range later this year from its **Austin**-area factory, according to comments founder Elon Musk gave on a local radio show last week. Also previewed in the discussion was the idea of a 500-mile range, 500-KW, 800-, or even 900-KW battery pack for the first vehicles, which, he hinted, might become Tesla's first fully autonomous vehicle - but not quite yet. [Story](#).

Heavy-duty truck manufacturer Navistar International is boosting its operations in **San Antonio** by an additional 60 workers - added to an existing 600 employees - who will focus on the company's line of electric trucks. [Details](#).

State legislatures increasingly impose their will on local city and county jurisdictions, not just in Texas but nationwide. Now, **Governing Magazine** weighs in with news that a 2018 survey found that 70% of local health officials and 60% of mayors had abandoned or delayed policies due to the threat of state preemption or intervention. The trend could deny urban Texans their voice and representation, says the magazine. [Opinion](#).

COVID-19 has sparked a new appreciation for the importance of parks and public greenspaces around the globe, with new urgency being felt - and new parks being built or renovated - in cities like **New York**, **Paris**, and **Barcelona**, just for starters, **Axios** reports. About 100 million Americans don't have a park within a 10-minute walk from home, according to a '*Parks and the Pandemic*,' a report from the Trust for Public Land. For a look at the TOP 10 best (and worst) cities for parks, go [here](#). Hint: **Austin** and **San Antonio** didn't rank in either. [Story](#).

Just how cold is it? So cold that Texas Parks & Wildlife closed two million acres of Texas coastline from **Port Mansfield** to **Galveston** to fishing over the weekend because game fish, largely trout and red fish, were so stunned by cold weather that they were too easy to catch, paralyzed along shorelines or gathered in shallow holes. One of the last times this happened was 1989, when 11 million fish were killed in a similar event. [Notice](#).

Thought of the Week

"A change in the weather is sufficient to recreate the world and ourselves."

— Marcel Proust

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