



Monday Morning Report

February 24, 2020

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council met last week in **San Marcos** (2/19) for discussions of the 'Greening IH-35' project, the upcoming Urban Land Institute charette on IH-35 through downtown **Austin**, a federal funding request for IH-35 in **San Antonio**, updates on **Dallas-Laredo** and **Houston-Dallas** high speed rail projects, and other active Council infrastructure and economic development efforts. For more information, email council@thecorridor.org.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Visiting firefighters from California recently warned that **Austin** remains at risk to devastating wildfires due to higher temperatures and high levels of urban vegetation near potentially threatened neighborhoods. This week, the publication **CityLab** is asking whether cities are accurately measuring their potential wildfire risk, noting that more than 340,000 California homeowners were stripped of fire insurance coverage between 2015-18 and others saw a 500% increase in premiums. New technology may prove part of the solution. [Story](#).

Former **San Antonio** city councilman and current VIA Metropolitan Transit board chairman Rey Saldana is heading to **Arlington, VA** to lead a non-profit educational group focused on supporting students at low-income schools. The move comes as the city's public transit agency is moving toward a crucial November election and local leaders are hoping that former chairman Hope Andrade will return to replace him. [Story](#).

Important meetings this week: The Texas Transportation Commission meets this week (2/27) in **Austin**, 9:00 am, with updates on the Unified Transportation Plan on the [agenda](#). The Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization hosts a public meeting on the impacts of regional transportation projects on air quality that same night, 6:00 pm in **San Antonio**. Details [here](#).

Part 3 of that transportation series in the **New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung**, out today, zeros in on a public transit study financed by the Alamo Area (**San Antonio**) Metropolitan Planning Organization, which concludes that the city could benefit from a fixed-route bus service. A lot of detail is included referencing other Corridor Communities such as **Round Rock** and **San Marcos**. [Story here](#).

About half of 1.5 million global traffic fatalities annually involve pedestrians, according to the World Health Organization. but now, a **Jerusalem**- based startup, Viziblezone, has merged artificial intelligence with smart city connectivity and mobile phone data to predict potential pedestrian intrusions into active motorways. Could be the next 'new thing' for autonomous technologies. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

The Real Estate Center at Texas A&M University in **College Station** released its 2020 growth forecast last week (2/13), noting that the Texas economy grew at a solid pace in 2019 'in the midst of one of the longest expansionary cycles in state history.' They warned that 2020 could suffer headwinds from the

slowing national and global economies, downward pressure on oil prices, and ongoing political and trade-related uncertainty. [Report](#).

If you have global connections, **San Antonio**'s economic development office wants to hear from you - particularly if you can help network trade opportunities in **Tokyo, Seoul, Frankfurt, Toronto, or Mexico City**. It's one part of a city international business strategy deemed the '*Passport San Antonio*' program. Details [here](#).

The **San Antonio Express-News** has weighed in with support for a city plan floated last week to continue Edwards Aquifer protection AND fund an expansion of VIA Metropolitan Transit. Aquifer protection would continue using existing San Antonio Water System revenues (about \$100 million over the next 10 years) and clear the way for a ballot proposition shifting a 1/8-cent sales tax towards improving bus networks across the city. [Opinion](#).

San Antonio home sales are soaring, up 16% in January over a year ago. 2,078 homes sold that month in the **San Antonio-New Braunfels** market, shrugging off the usual sales slump during the winter months in the Alamo City. Prices also rose, with the median up 6% to \$229,400. [Details](#).

Hutto's \$800 million 'Perfect Game' project appears to be anything but - a lawsuit the city filed and dismissed last week would seem to indicate. A tangled tale is emerging of a private developer of baseball recreational facilities allegedly interfering with the city's plan for a related real estate transaction. Legacy Development, a baseball scouting company, had announced in April 2019 that it was moving its headquarters from Iowa to the booming town just northeast of **Austin**, but it's early innings yet. [Details](#).

Long time Texas state senator Kirk Watson (D-**Austin**) announced last week (2/18) that he would be leaving his seat April 30 to take over leadership of the Hobby School of Public Affairs at the University of **Houston**, setting off a potential 'domino effect' through local political slots. At least two current House members, one city councilman, and a county judge are considering running to replace him. [Story](#).

Austin businessman Frank Krasovec was traveling to **Shanghai** when his assistant received instructions - supposedly from him - to wire-transfer first \$150,000, then \$300,000 to an account in **Hong Kong**. Problem: it was a hacker posing as Mr. Krasovec who ordered the transaction. The **Wall Street Journal** reports on a growing cyber-security issue that strikes close to home. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

- Margaret Mead

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