



Monday Morning Report

March 2, 2020

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council will meet Wednesday, March 18, 2:00 pm at the Corridor Council offices, 304 North C.M. Allen Parkway, in **San Marcos**. For more information, email council@thecorridor.org.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Plans to rebuild Interstate 35 through **Central Austin** got very real last week as the Texas Transportation Commission approved an additional \$4.3 billion for the \$7.5 billion effort. A lot of details remain to be filled in, but it appears the main lanes will be depressed, two new managed lanes in each direction will be added, and the project could commence construction within two years. ([Story](#).) Meanwhile, an Urban Land Institute/Downtown Austin Alliance strategy to 'cut and cap' the highway, re-connecting parts of Austin to downtown, was unveiled. [Details](#). [Still more](#).

San Antonio city manager Erik Walsh announced a major reshuffle of his organization last week, splitting the formerly united Capital Improvements and Transportation Departments into two new agencies, one focused on transportation planning and the other overseeing construction/maintenance of roads, drainage, libraries and parks. The move comes as the city and VIA Metropolitan Transit orchestrate more funding for the city's transit networks. [Story](#). [More coverage](#).

The Transportation Research Board will host a web event **this** Wednesday, March 4, 2020, from 2- 3:30 p.m. ET that describes 'tactical urbanism' and identifies current practices in tactical transit projects. This webinar draws on research from this Transit Cooperative Report Program: *Fast-Tracked: A Tactical Transit Study*. [Details](#).

TEXRail, a recently built commuter rail service operating between **Fort Worth** and **DFW Airport** with stops in **North Richland Hills** and **Grapevine**, will use \$38.9 million in unspent federal funds from its startup financing to extend new service two miles to the city's south side. [Story](#).

Driverless vans may begin shuttling passengers around the former Brooks Air Base in **San Antonio** by the end of this year, officials announced last week. The city is seeking two autonomous, 6-8 passenger vans to begin a testing program. [Story](#). Meanwhile, a driverless shuttle service in **Corpus Christi** was suspended last month by federal authorities due to safety concerns. [Details](#).

The **San Antonio** Mobility Coalition and VIA Metropolitan Transit will host the 2020 Transportation Leadership Series Event, *State of Transit*, on March 27 at the Witte Museum. [Register](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Economists from the Brookings Institute in **Washington** are proposing three ways that cities can redefine their economic trajectories: build advanced industries to encourage job growth; diversity for resilient

growth; and target high job quality industries to foster inclusive growth. Their research paper includes an interactive roadmap for growing good jobs in 25 metro area across the US. [Essay. Growth Roadmap.](#)

Ride-hailing company Uber has redesigned its mobile phone application to include real-time language translation, thus potentially resolving problems for both drivers and passengers who speak different languages. Both parties can tap a 'translate' button to convert texts for mutually understood communication in over 100 languages. Finally, a **Bronx** accent hack. [Story.](#)

San Antonio's Bob Rivard published an interesting take this weekend on the spread of the coronavirus, arguing that some supply-chain disruptions affecting the US (and world) economy might have been avoided had more American (and global) companies built manufacturing facilities in Mexico and Latin America instead of Asia. He lauds city leaders' handling of the crisis locally, also. [Opinion.](#)

US Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-**Austin-San Antonio**) is out with an op-ed this morning that chronicles some of the 'behind-the-scenes' meetings held last month to coordinate federal response to the coronavirus with local officials in **San Antonio**. He's urging a bi-partisan approach to aid victims and avoid panic. [Opinion.](#)

Round Rock mayor Craig Morgan used his 'state of the city' address last week to blast a state comptroller's plan to change the way internet-generated sales taxes are collected, telling local residents the city would lose at least \$20 million in annual revenue under the new proposal. He says the comptroller is 'exceeding his authority.' [Story.](#)

We don't know if it will do her any good or not, but a candidate for a **Bexar County** commissioner's slot being vacated by Kevin Wolff has some campaign slogans that call to mind words that ordinarily wouldn't make it into a family newspaper. Points for originality, though. [Details.](#)

Thought of the Week

"I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crisis. The great point is to bring them the real facts."

- Abraham Lincoln

This newsletter was sent to you on behalf of council@thecorridor.org. It is available to our members. If you wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter, please [click here](#) to send an email request to council@thecorridor.org.

©2020 Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council