



Monday Morning Report

March 18, 2019

INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** Council Executive Committee is *THIS* Wednesday, 2:00 pm, at the Corridor Council offices, 304 North C.M. Allen Parkway, **San Marcos**, Texas. Jonathan Bean from TxDOT's **San Antonio** office will be joining us. RSVP at council@thecorridor.org; draft agenda [here](#).

Mark Your Calendars: A strategy planning session for the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee will take place Wednesday, April 17, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel, 625 Commercial Loop, **San Marcos**, Texas. Former **San Antonio** mayor (and Corridor Council founder) Henry Cisneros will be joining us to offer his perspectives on future activities. Seating is limited, so RSVP *now* to council@thecorridor.org. For info, call (512) 558-7364.

We would also like to welcome new members, American Bank and Generations Federal Credit Union.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Senator Kirk Watson (D-**Austin**) has introduced several bills aimed at increasing statewide highway funding and specific legislation to speed the re-construction of Interstate 35 through Central Texas. One measure (SB 1077) doubles the state motor fuels tax, which hasn't been raised since 1991, and in a filing statement he noted that in 2017 the tax raised \$2.76 billion for roads and \$918 million for schools. Other bills authorize bonding and Comprehensive Development Agreements authorities for the IH-35 project.

[Details.](#)

San Antonio mayor Ron Nirenberg, testifying before the US House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee last week, made headlines and TV newscasts with a call for federal assistance in building a regional rail line between **Austin-San Antonio**. He asked Congress to invest in regional connectivity, invest in citizen's mobility, and invest in data-driven safety programs. Testimony [here](#). Media coverage [here](#).

A routing dispute involving a light rail connection between **Chapel Hill** and **Durham**, North Carolina, has local city officials blaming Duke University for killing the project. In a virtual case-study of how **not** to conduct an environmental review process, university officials waited until the 11th hour to object to the 17-mile rail line's route alongside their property, blowing up two decades worth of agreements on the \$2.7 billion project. A cautionary tale [here](#).

Colorado researchers have found that 25% of all ride-hailing trips in **Denver** would have otherwise used a parking space. They conclude that a long-term result may be that cities (and developers) will require fewer parking spaces at airports, downtowns, performance venues, restaurants, and universities. [Story.](#)

A Quebec-based company announced last week that it has begun providing the first of an estimated 2000 Chinese-manufactured electric taxis to the city of **Montreal**. Various state and federal subsidies have reduced the cost of the vehicles, which have a cruising range of 186-miles between re-charges, to about \$35,000 US dollars each. [Details.](#)

Last week, the National League of Cities published '*Fixing Funding by The Mile,*' a primer and guide arguing for a shift from funding roadways through a fuel tax to 'road user charges' - a mileage charge. The guide reviews the advantages and disadvantages of 'RUC's' and existing programs using them, implementation challenges, and their specific uses by cities. There is an appendix with policy questions to consider during a changeover. [Report](#).

In her 'State of Travis County' address earlier this month, Judge Sarah Eckhardt touted more than 60 transportation projects underway or completed from a 2017 bond package, highlighted some successes in the county court system, and renewed a call made earlier for the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority to put toll revenues toward regional transit projects. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and 'Other' News)

On the heels of this month's jobs creation numbers, the Hamilton Project in **Washington** has published a piece examining where US jobs growth has occurred over the last 18 years. Using a 'Vitality Index' that measures various demographic and economic factors at the county level, the Index reveals that the rich urban areas get richer while the poorer, rural areas continue to struggle. [Report](#).

The **Austin** Chamber of Commerce has scheduled their 2019 Federal Advocacy Trip for June 24-26 in **Washington**. Featured events include a session with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and a focus on the Department of Defense, as it relates to the Army Futures Command. [Details](#).

Cedar Park, northwest of **Austin**, is contemplating significant tax incentives for a massive \$1.5 billion Indigo Ridge North development that will include 40 tennis courts linked to the headquarters of the US Tennis Association Texas. The project is being compared in scope and size to **Austin's** already extant The Domain. [Details](#).

Lack of tax and regulatory clarity has stalled some funds flowing into Opportunity Zones - created by the 2017 tax law to spur investment into pre-designated, economically-distressed areas - but a second tranche of regulations is due any day now from the US Treasury Department. Investors are seeking more flexibility in the time-horizons for taxation and the types of businesses that can qualify, according to this report on a project in **Avondale**, Arizona. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"It's what you learn after you know it all that's important."

- Jimmy Williams

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