



## Monday Morning Report

March 22, 2021

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### INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council met last week (3/17) for a presentation from a Port of Houston official on freight mobility issues between **Houston** and Central/South Texas. The Committee approved exploration of an improved "10-to-10" freight corridor of state highway routes with TxDOT, approved a new AUS-SAT round of talks with civic and business leaders on economic development goals, approved a 2021 operating budget, and discussed various Council projects including the Electric Transportation Act, IH-35 improvements through downtown **Austin**, and upcoming improvement efforts on US 281 from north of **San Antonio** to **Burnet**.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Confirmed global cases are at 123,302,986 this morning, with 2,716,829 deaths. US cases will likely top 30 million later this week with 542,359 deaths as of this morning (3/22). (**Johns Hopkins**). Texas was reporting 2,366,494 confirmed cases as of yesterday, with 46,413 deaths, including **Bexar County**: 171,097 cases with 3,216 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 10,352 cases with 200 deaths; **Comal County**: 5,025 cases with 279 deaths; **Hays County**: 16,877 cases with 200 deaths; **Travis County**: 78,108 cases with 933 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 36,556 cases with 438 deaths (3/21). (**TDHHS**).

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

Important Transportation Meetings This Week: US Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg appears before the House Transportation Committee this Thursday (3/25), 10 am, to discuss Biden administration transportation priorities (*livestream [here](#)*); at same time and day, the Texas Transportation Commission hears the TxDOT 'Border Transportation Master Plan 2021,' (*livestream [here](#)*).

In the most significant US railroad transaction since Warren Buffet's Berkshire Hathaway purchase of the BNSF Railroad in 2010, Canadian Pacific and **Kansas City** Southern yesterday (3/20) announced plans to merge in a \$29 billion deal - thus creating the first railroad network to connect the US, Mexico, and Canada. The combined company will have headquarters in **Calgary**, with **Kansas City** serving as the US base. An official called the merger "a compelling opportunity to take trucks off the road." **Story**.

Another Fine Mess: Last month's energy blackouts have sparked calls for retroactively repricing electric costs from throughout the Capitol in **Austin**, but experts are yet unsure of whom exactly that benefits. Elected state leadership is split on the issue and meanwhile consumers and energy providers - such as CPS Energy in **San Antonio**, said to be suddenly \$1 billion in debt - continue to suffer. **Story. More**.

The **New Braunfels** city council takes up the issue of through-truck restrictions in the area around Interstate 35 and State Highway 46 later today (3/22). Residents' complaints have led to various city studies and the local Transportation and Traffic Advisory Board approved the restrictions last month (2/11). **Story**.

A leading **London** newspaper is now calling the global shortage of semi-conductors a 'crisis' that will affect the worldwide supply of cars, trucks, computers, televisions, Xboxes, and even Apple iPhones.

"There is no sign of supply catching up, or demand decreasing, while prices are rising across the chain," said an industry leader; another called the situation a "perfect storm." [Story](#).

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Honda has raced to the head of the pack in autonomous vehicles by introducing the first production car capable of achieving Level 3 self-driving capabilities. The vehicle differs from other Level 2 offerings by progressing from partial automation - like Tesla's Autopilot - to conditional automation, which means it can read and act upon the operating environment without driver intervention. [Story](#).

The biggest financial beneficiary of the \$1.9 trillion Covid American Relief Plan, with its flood of \$1400 stimulus checks to US taxpayers, could be the stock market: Deutsche Bank recently estimated that up to \$170 billion from the latest round of stimulus payments could be going straight into US equities, leading to 'a bit more mania, speculation in the market,' according to an analyst. [Story](#).

**San Antonio** International Airport officials are weighing a three-prong expansion effort that, in addition to improving runways and road access, include adding new gates, widening concourses, and enhancing security procedures. Officials expect annual passengers to double, up to 20 million, by 2040. [Story](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards."*

— Søren Kierkegaard

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