



Monday Morning Report

March 23, 2020

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council met by telephone last week (3/18) and voted to join the Texas Association of Business in recommending that TxDOT reconsider the use of tolling to finance new managed lanes for Interstate 35 through downtown **Austin**. Such action could free up about \$600 million in local funds about to be pledged to the project (through the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization) that could be used for other local projects. The Committee also received updates on **Houston-Dallas** high speed rail developments, IH-35 'Cut and Cap' developments, and other Council efforts. For further information, email council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 DATA: We've been asked to provide updates to members on the current status of the coronavirus in the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor**.

These are some reliable data-sources:

For *global statistics by country*, updated hourly, we go to the Johns Hopkins world map, which can be found [here](#).

As of 12:00 noon on 03-22-20, Johns Hopkins is currently reporting 321,943 total confirmed cases worldwide, 13,714 deaths, and 94,704 cases recovered. They report 30,285 active US cases.

For *US statistics by state*, you can find the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website [here](#), but it does not update over the weekend and as of 4:00 pm Friday (3/20) CDC was reporting only 15,219 US cases.

For *Texas data by county*, the Texas State Department of Health & Human Services (DSHS) website, updated at 12 noon daily, can be found [here](#). It is reporting total Texas statewide cases at 334 and total Texas deaths so far of 5 people. This site does not report on repatriated or cruise ship cases, and their numbers may vary substantially from local news reports. As of 12 noon 03-22-20, the site reported cases in **Bexar County** (24), **Travis County** (22), **Comal County** (3), **Hays County** (6), and **Williamson County** (9). DSHS lists 69 cases not categorized by county.

By contrast, local news reports at the same time (12 noon 03-22-20) indicated an actual 39 cases in **Bexar County** ([here](#)) and 62 cases in **Travis County** ([here](#)).

The **New York Times** is also producing a series of interactive maps that include infection/death projections, current infections, and other relevant data that can be accessed [here](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Henry Cisneros, co-founder of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council and mayor of **San Antonio**, recently provided us with a transcript of a recent speech to the **Austin**-Area Research Organization in which he addresses the current economic and demographic status of Corridor Communities and makes recommendations regarding joint **Austin-San Antonio** efforts in a number of arenas including mobility

and congestion, a combined Metropolitan Statistical Area designation for the two cities, intercity bus connections, cooperation on airport development, and more. He also makes a strong case for supporting the Corridor Council. See the speech here, [part 1](#) and [part 2](#).

A new report, *'Transit Investments In An Age Of Uncertainty,'* from McKinsey & Company consultants, offers some suggestions for how cities and rail operators can shape mobility systems to incorporate new technologies. They estimate that by 2025 agencies will spend \$100 billion on new rolling stock and break ground on \$1.4 trillion in new light rail and metro projects (that's pre-Coronavirus modeling). Examining 10 proposed investments of more than \$500 million each in cities such as **New York, San Jose, and Seattle**, the report analyzes the potential impacts of autonomous vehicles on transit ridership. [Report](#).

If you're looking for a silver lining in the current cloud of bad news about the pandemic or the economy, you might consider this: as cities across the globe from **New York to Beijing to London** shut down to avoid the impacts of the coronavirus, traffic congestion and air pollution are dropping dramatically. A satellite that detects emissions linked to cars and trucks shows huge declines in pollution over metropolitan areas including **Los Angeles, Seattle, New York, Chicago, and Atlanta**. There's more. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

With so many economists racing to develop scenarios of what a post-Coronavirus economy might resemble, it's hard to gauge where all of the current financial uncertainty might lead. There are some scary prognostications out there, including this one from *'The Business Journals'* Craig Douglas, suggesting that government quarantines could result in economic upheaval and job dislocations unseen since World War II. He projects a second quarter contraction that will rival 'the steepest in history.' [Opinion](#).

McKinsey & Company reports on the implications for the business environment of the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, including two different scenarios for how both the government and the disease develop, from a delayed economic recovery to a prolonged economic contraction. It addresses workforce and supply-chain protection, engagement, financial stress-testing, and response-integration for business. [Report](#).

Some experts are objecting to the very idea of government-imposed quarantines, including Yale's David L. Katz (an MD), who argues that 'this near total meltdown of normal life' will have far greater economic consequences than the direct toll of the virus itself. He says that the virus toll will amount to only 0.01% of the global annual death rate of 60 million from all other causes (and those largely 'people with relatively low life expectancy'). [More Opinion](#).

While awaiting the third round of federal spending bills from **Washington DC** (which as of now looks like a \$2 trillion package of direct payments, tax cuts, business loans, and interest-payment forgiveness), it was encouraging last week to see that **Bexar County** wasn't wasting any time providing up to \$5 million in loans and \$250,000 in assistance-funding for local businesses. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"Life has a way of testing a person's will, either by having nothing happen at all or by having everything happen at once."

- Paulo Coelho

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