



## Monday Morning Report

March 29, 2021

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### INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, April 21<sup>st</sup> at 2 PM by video conference. For questions, contact [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org).

**COVID-19 UPDATE:** Confirmed global cases are at 127,285,692 this morning, with 2,785,365 deaths. US deaths will likely top 550,000 later today, with currently 30,262,717 cases (3/29). ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Texas was reporting 2,386,312 confirmed cases as of yesterday, with 47,156 deaths, including **Bexar County:** 172,120 cases with 3,299 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 10,420 cases with 204 deaths; **Comal County:** 5,076 cases with 282 deaths; **Hays County:** 17,044 cases with 201 deaths; **Travis County:** 78,828 cases with 945 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 36,920 cases with 448 deaths (3/28). ([TDHHS](#)).

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

President Biden will unveil his long-awaited, multi-trillion-dollar infrastructure plan *this* Wednesday (3/31) in **Pittsburgh** and is expected to describe a two-part program that will first focus on traditional physical elements (roads, bridges, rails, dams, etc.), and later 'soft' elements including health and childcare.

[Story](#). [More](#).

In advance of the President's visit (*above*) the **Pittsburgh Post-Gazette** suggests that the US needs a new definition of infrastructure itself. Instead of freeways, bridges and dams, the new infrastructure includes a carbon-free electric generation and grid network, universal education and health care, reformed urban design, and worldwide internet service, they say. [Opinion](#).

The **Austin** city council issued its official response to the Capital Expressway expansion project on Interstate 35 through downtown last week (3/25), asking TxDOT for tolled lanes (instead of the proposed High-Occupancy Vehicle lanes), specific bus connections from key cross streets, and slower, more pedestrian-friendly frontage roads. The city also raised the issue of 'capping' the freeway but didn't offer a funding plan. [Story](#).

Texas House Bill 2221, the Electric Transportation Act, which provides a statewide framework for electric vehicles and developing a charging network for them, has been referred to the State Affairs Committee and with a first hearing scheduled *this* Thursday (4/1). The measure, backed by the Texas Electric Transportation Resources Alliance (of which the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council is a member), was introduced by Transportation Committee Chairman Terry Canales. For a description of HB 2221, go [here](#).

Traffic volumes across Texas, including in **Austin** and **San Antonio**, dropped dramatically during the COVID-19 pandemic, cut by almost 50% in most urban areas. But now, **Austonia** newsletter reports that TxDOT says volumes are not just returning to pre-pandemic levels, but sometimes exceeding them.

[Story](#).

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

The economic and environmental impacts of the pandemic (lost jobs, for example, but lowered air pollution because of less traffic) has led some economists and environmentalists to argue that 'degrowth' - or, slowing the economy, is one way to avoid climate catastrophe. But new datasets reported by **Axios**, indicates that exactly to opposite is true: global growth may actually improve the environment. [Story](#).

In a similar vein, the **New York Times** reports that pandemic-induced ridership losses to buses and trains are a problem for climate change efforts because mass transit offers the best alternative to long term improvements in air quality and carbon reduction globally. **New York** subway traffic, for example, is currently one-third of pre-pandemic levels, leading to increased auto traffic. [Story](#).

CNN reports from **Washington** that the electric vehicle industry is revitalizing small towns across the US, including places like **Normal**, Illinois and **Sparks**, Nevada, sometimes replacing shuttered traditional auto manufacturing plants. The story offers clues to what might lay ahead for **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Communities by embracing an obviously growing 'clean car' industry. [Story](#).

Accessory dwelling units (ADU's), commonly known as 'granny flats,' are part of a tiny homes trend reshaping US housing markets in urban centers. **CityLab** reports that new state laws that curb cumbersome local restrictions on adding backyard housing units have sparked a boom in ADU's. [Story](#). And **Austin** joins the movement [here](#).

That giant cargo ship blocking the **Suez Canal** was finally wrenched free this morning, five days after it ran aground and locked-down 10-12% of worldwide trade, but the entire episode reveals this about the global supply chain: the more complex systems grow, the more fragile they become. [Story](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"The way to get started is to quit talking and begin doing."*

- Walt Disney

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