



Monday Morning Report

April 5, 2021

INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, April 21st at 2 PM by video conference. If you would like to add to the agenda, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Confirmed global cases were at 131,124,958 yesterday, with 2,850,109 deaths thus far. US deaths will reach 555,000 today, with 30,702,245 cases reported yesterday (4/4/21). ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Texas was reporting 2,403,393 confirmed cases yesterday, with 47,746 deaths, including **Bexar County:** 173,308 cases with 3,350 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 10,513 cases with 207 deaths; **Comal County:** 5,131 cases with 285 deaths; **Hays County:** 17,187 cases with 203 deaths; **Travis County:** 79,493 cases with 957 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 37,226 cases with 454 deaths (4/4). There are now cumulatively 322,858 confirmed cases in these Corridor Counties, with 5,456 deaths. ([TDHHS](#)).

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Biden administration released details of their \$2.3 trillion infrastructure plan last week in **Pittsburgh**, and it's a breathtaking bundle of change with \$621 billion designated for transportation, including \$115 billion for highways, bridges and roads, \$85 billion for public transit, \$80 billion for passenger and freight rail, \$174 billion for electric vehicles, and about another \$175 billion for everything from airports to addressing resiliency. [Details](#).

One way the new Biden administration transportation plan breaks from the past is by dedicating more money to public transit than highways - a first in recent memory - and by dedicating more of the highway funding to maintaining the current roadway network rather than extending it - another first. The **New York Times** reports that it won't be an easy transition ([here](#)). The plan directs \$80 billion at a massive Amtrak expansion vision, which includes an **Austin-San Antonio** passenger rail connection ([here](#)). More [details](#).

Texas could be first in line for high-speed rail funding available from the new Biden infrastructure plan, according to the state's top transportation reporter for the **Fort Worth Star-Telegram**. Gordon Dickson cites the Texas Central Railway's **Houston-Dallas** project and a **Dallas-Laredo-Monterrey** proposal, which includes **Austin-San Antonio**, as likely first beneficiaries. [Story](#). [More](#).

Further developments last week on that dispute between **Austin** and TxDOT over design of the IH-35 Capital Expressway project: TxDOT wants two HOV lanes in each direction; the city wants tolls, making them less prone to congestion and allowing for a smaller project footprint. [Details](#). Meanwhile, a dispute on equity issues between **Houston** and TxDOT over IH-45 design led the USDOT to halt to that project, surprising some. [Story](#).

San Antonio media are calling a local college professor, Wassim Ghannoum, the 'Concrete King' after he won a prestigious industry award for developing a crazy-simple way to repair failing bridges and other

structures using carbon fiber reinforced polymers (Don't ask us to explain). Hats off to TxDOT for funding ten years of research. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Outrage is building among school districts across Texas at what some believe is an attempt by the state's political leadership in **Austin** to hold hostage \$18 billion in federal money - previously designated for public schools as pandemic/stimulus relief - and instead use the funds to plug gaps in the state budget. No word yet from state officials on their side of the story. [Opinion](#). [More](#).

The seemingly ubiquitous Elon Musk said last week that Tesla hiring in **Austin** could reach 10,000 jobs - double what he promised **Travis County** just a year ago - even as his manufacturing facilities elsewhere soared past previous projections for auto outputs and deliveries ([here](#)). Meanwhile, **San Antonio** granted property tax relief estimated at \$235,000 for Germany-based Saueressig Engineering - a Tesla supplier - for a \$9 million North American headquarters on the Alamo City's East Side. [Story](#).

Tesla competitor Rivian announced an astonishing 'go it alone' strategy for building a nationwide network of electric car battery re-charging stations: 3500 fast-chargers at 600 sites and at least 10,000 slow-chargers by 2024 at 'waypoints' like camping grounds and parks used by their target market of hikers and off-road enthusiasts. For comparison, Tesla took nine years to deploy 9,723 fast-charging sites. [Story](#).

The most succinct argument yet for infrastructure as economic development: "Of course infrastructure pays for itself. It leverages the greatest resource on earth: people." A **Washington Post** columnist argues that infrastructure spending is always a good idea - even if we don't want to spend the money at the time. With apologies to Bob Dylan, he writes, "Networks that aren't busy being born are busy dying." [Opinion](#).

Thought of the Week

"It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change."

- Charles Darwin

This newsletter is available to our members. If you wish to unsubscribe, please send an email request to council@thecorridor.org.