



Monday Morning Report

April 27, 2020

INTERNAL

COVID-19 UPDATE: At 12:00 noon Sunday (4/26) the worldwide coronavirus illness count reached 2,934,141 confirmed cases with 205,142 deaths. The US had 943,865 confirmed cases with 54,480 deaths. ([Johns Hopkins](#)) Texas had 24,631 reported cases with 648 fatalities ([TSDHS](#)). Regionally, **Bexar County** reported 1,231 cases, 43 deaths; **Comal County:** 49 cases, 6 deaths; **Hays County:** 148 cases, 1 death; **Travis County:** 1,396, cases with 36 fatalities; **Williamson County:** 262 cases, 6 deaths.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The **Washington Post** reported over the weekend that a rift was emerging in **Washington** between Republicans over infrastructure spending in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. President Trump is promoting major infrastructure investment and a payroll tax cut while senior Senate Republicans are balking because of the impact on the national debt. Debates over bailouts for cities and states are complicating the situation. [Story](#).

Making a tough decision to defer a series of local projects in favor of funding an expansion of IH-35 through central **Austin** last week (4/20), the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization voted to commit \$633 million to the roughly \$7.5 billion Capital Expressway project. Which specific projects are to be deferred will be decided at a June 8 meeting. Mayor Steve Adler expressed hope, during his vote in favor, that new lanes currently designated as 'general purpose' lanes would eventually become managed or tolled lanes as **Dallas** officials had proposed. [Story](#).

The Texas Transportation Commission meets this Thursday, 9:00 am in **Austin** to approve, possibly, amendments to the 2020 Unified Transportation Plan that would include major funding for improvements to IH-35 through Central **Austin**. You can watch a live stream of the meeting [here](#).

Tyson Foods, one of the nation's largest food producers, warned in full-page ads this morning (4/27) in the **New York Times** and the **Washington Post** that the US food supply chain is in danger of breaking down and that rising meat prices may be the result - all due to the coronavirus pandemic. The company wants federal relief to keep its employees and customers safe. [Story](#).

There seems to be a developing consensus that more contact tracing is going to be required to truly open the national economy again. The Rockefeller Foundation has estimated that 200-300,000 contact-tracers - medically trained investigators - will be required for the job. Now, two former top federal health officials in **Washington** have put forward a \$46 billion proposal to implement just such a program and deal with infection isolation-issues. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Is it too soon to open **San Antonio**? There is an unresolved tension between elected officials who want to open up the economy and public life as quickly as possible and public health experts who warn that weeks

of sheltering is not enough,' writes Bob Rivard in yesterday's (4/26) **Rivard Report**. Patience is the best cure, he says. **Opinion**. The same debate (and tension) is playing out in **Travis County**, where an 'oscillation strategy' described as 'hammer and dance' - attributed to engineer Tomas Pueyo - is under discussion, **here**. A thoughtful, science-based national approach is outlined by an economist on this **blog**.

Travis County's Financial Transparency Portal displayed an alarming number this morning, reflecting an increase in unemployment claims between February-March 2020 of nearly 2000%, from 1,407 to 29,448 claims for unemployment insurance. Hardest-hit sectors were Accommodations & Food Services.

Website.

The backers of **Austin's** South By Southwest Conference, canceled by city officials over coronavirus fears, have been sued by disgruntled ticket-holders upset by the conferences 'no refunds' policy. The lawsuit was filed in **Travis County** by ticket purchasers from Colorado and Massachusetts. Expect more on this.

Details.

Discoverer has finally discovered Austin. The widely-distributed travel site's 148th edition is focused on the weirdest city in Texas - their words - and sure they cover the bats, the barbecue, the springs, the Mexican food, and the only clothing-optional beach in the Lone Star state. They even compare South Congress to the Champs-Elysees in **Paris**. But the Cathedral of Junk? **Story.**

The world's largest vaccine manufacturer is producing 40 million units of a coronavirus vaccine that begins human trials in **Oxford**, England this week. The India-based company says they want to get ahead of a production demand worldwide that they expect to be enormous - so they are starting production before even knowing if the vaccine works. **Story.**

Hundreds, if not thousands, of cars and trucks lined Interstate 35 between **Austin** and **San Marcos** last week as part of funeral tributes for **San Marcos** policeman Justin Putnam, killed in the line of duty on April 18. He was just 31 years old, about to be married, and died in an incident that injured two other officers. **Story.**

Thought of the Week

"All things must pass."

- George Harrison 1943-2001

(nee Matthew 24:6-8 King James Version)

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