



## Monday Morning Report

May 11, 2020

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### INTERNAL

**COVID-19 UPDATE:** Worldwide confirmed cases totaled 4,077,594 with 281,287 fatalities as of 12:00 noon yesterday, Sunday (5/10). The US reached 1,320,362 confirmed cases, with nearly 80,000 deaths. (*Johns Hopkins*) In Texas, statewide reported cases stood at 37,860, with 1,049 deaths. As of 12:15 pm, Saturday (5/9): **Bexar County:** 1,835 cases, 56 deaths; **Comal County:** 65 cases, 6 deaths; **Guadalupe County** (includes parts of **New Braunfels**): 92 cases, 0 fatalities; **Hays County:** 203 cases, 2 deaths; **Travis County:** 2,071 cases, 60 deaths; **Williamson County:** 371 cases, 12 deaths. (*TXDHS*)

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

A *Forbes* magazine columnist advances the theory that only a robust, European-style infrastructure rebuilding program can unite the nation, resolve wealth-gap disparities, and iron out issues between 'have' and 'have-not' states. "At a time when transport, telecoms and educational infrastructure needs to be badly upgraded, this should be done in a way that helps to equalize rather than exacerbate the differences between states," he argues. *Opinion*.

A state appeals court has ruled that Texas Central Railway, the folks behind that high-speed rail project between **Dallas-Houston**, is both a railroad and an interurban electric railway. The decision comes after a filing by **Leon County** landowners that claimed the company did not have various rights associated with railroads, such as eminent domain and access to property for surveyors. Expected later this month or next is a final ruling from the Federal Railroad Administration on the project's environmental impact statement. *Story*.

The Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization approved the \$42 billion 2045 long range Regional Transportation Plan last week (5/4) for the **Austin** area, including a massive spending plan for expansion of IH-35 through the central city - though it wasn't pretty. Urban interests raised objections to the process through which the plan was developed and insisted on language involving travel demand management. *Story. More Details*.

**Austin** and **Travis County** officials, convinced by the pandemic 'stay at home' orders that telecommuting is a feasible way to relieve traffic congestion, have begun devising policies that would institutionalize working at home - at least part of the time - for large segments of the city and county workforce. *Story*. Initial plans for **Travis County** are on their agenda *tomorrow* (Tuesday, 5/12, 9:00 am). *Live Stream*.

Chalk up one more weird side-effect of COVID-19: high speed car crashes. Officials in places as diverse as Minnesota, **Atlanta** and **New York** are reporting that less-congested streets have led to a rash of speeding violations and fatal accidents attributed to motorists taking advantage of empty highways to race their vehicles at above-average speeds. *Story*.

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Consulting firm McKinsey & Company has recently produced a draft of guidance reports for public policy and health officials related to the COVID-19 crisis that cover testing challenges to re-opening of the economy ([here](#)), the path to a post-pandemic economy ([here](#)), getting ahead of the next stage of the crisis ([here](#)), and (our favorite) "the future is not what it used to be: thoughts on the next 'normal.'" ([here](#))

Within the context of arguing that the COVID-19 pandemic calls for re-thinking governance across regions, two Brookings Institute economists provide data analyzing city-pairs across the US that might become candidates for merging into a single Metropolitan Statistical Area or Consolidated Statistical Area by the Census Bureau. **Austin-San Antonio** makes a list of 40 potential candidates. [Report](#).

Alamo Drafthouse, the theater group with screens throughout the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor**, has launched its own curated streaming service similar to Amazon Prime Video and Netflix - Alamo On Demand - but this time with selections chosen by their own staff of die-hard movie fans. The move started as a reaction to quarantine orders that cut ticket demand at their theaters but may grow into something much bigger. [Details](#).

Experts and local officials are warning of serious cutbacks for city budgets in the upcoming fiscal year, the **Texas Tribune** reports. Sales taxes, which typically generate around 30% of municipal revenues, have dropped dramatically due to coronavirus concerns. **Dallas** has already furloughed 472 workers, **San Antonio** reduced its workforce related to travel and tourism by nearly 300, and **Houston** mayor Sylvester Turner is bracing for the 'worst budget year the city has faced in its history.' [Story](#).

The mercurial electric car magnate Elon Musk, upset by health restrictions imposed on his Tesla plants by California officials, threatened over the weekend to move his corporate headquarters to either Nevada or Texas - no doubt setting off flurries of economic developer activity in both states. Why not **San Antonio**, which already has auto manufacturing, trained workers, established parts-supply chains, and offers a gateway to Latin America? [Story](#).

Former **San Antonio** mayor Ivy Taylor has a new position: president of Rust College, a historically black college of 800 students affiliated with the United Methodist Church in **Holly Springs**, Mississippi. [Details](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"We learn from history that we do not learn from history."*

— Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

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