



Monday Morning Report

June 1, 2021

Memorial Day Edition

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council's Executive Committee is scheduled to meet June 16 at 2pm by videoconference. To add an item to the agenda, email council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global confirmed cases reached 170,771,941 as of today, with 3,551,570 total deaths. US cases are at 32,264,595, with 594,568 deaths thus far (6/1). ([Johns Hopkins](#)) Texas is reporting 2,517,276 confirmed cases with 50,426 fatalities, including in **Bexar County**: 183,999 cases with 3,571 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 11,434 cases with 216 deaths; **Comal County**: 5,797 cases with 299 deaths; **Hays County**: 18,864 cases with 216 deaths; **Travis County**: 83,772 cases with 1,023 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 39,702 cases with 476 deaths (5/31/21). ([TDHHS](#)).

INFRASTRUCTURE

One-fifth of the nation's major highways, some 164,000 miles, are in poor condition - with an estimated \$435 billion backlog of rehabilitation needs in 2019 - according to a **Washington Post** analysis, yet more than a third of the states' capital spending (including Texas) went toward expanding the road network instead of fixing what is already there. Expansion is still a priority over repair in some states. [Story](#).

Can removing highways fix US cities? Dozens of projects nationwide are under consideration for removal, undoing two generations of efforts to develop the comprehensive US Interstate system. The reason? Some believe highways divide communities, particularly ethnic neighborhoods, producing noise, pollution, and safety hazards. A fad quickly becomes a trend. [Story](#).

The \$6 trillion 2022 Biden administration budget released last week contains \$36.1 million toward two new Bus Rapid Transit projects for **Austin's** Capital Metro, part of \$2.5 billion in competitive funding through the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grant Program. [Story](#). [Details](#).

Our friends at the **San Antonio** Mobility Coalition cite three key transportation outcomes from the 2021 Legislative Session, which ended yesterday: Propositions 1 & 7 funding remained intact; Texas Mobility Fund re-opened access to \$3 billion for highway & transit projects; a constitutional amendment, if approved by voters this fall, will allow counties to participate in Transportation Reinvestment Zones. [Details](#). [More](#). [Still More](#).

TxDOT will have a public meeting for the expansion of US 281 from Borgfield to SH 46. This presentation is virtual and will be accessible on [TxDOT.gov](https://www.txdot.gov) until June 2, 2021.

Beginning *today* (6/1), Marc Williams takes over as executive director of TxDOT, replacing James Bass, who is moving on to the **Central Texas** Regional Mobility Authority. Williams has served as deputy executive director since 2016, so he is no stranger to the task at hand. More details on the transition can be found [here](#).

More details emerged last week about Amtrak's plans to expand service in the Texas Triangle, including to/from **Austin** and **San Antonio**, within the next 15 years. The \$75 billion investment plan was outlined in a 70-plus page document that identified improvements intended for the Northeast Corridor and a series of new intercity connections, all pitched for environmental and economic development benefits. **Amtrak Plan. Story.**

Forget about those expensive radar deer-detectors for your car and get a wolf instead. New research finds that the re-introduction of endangered grey wolves in Wisconsin has led to a 24% reduction in auto-deer collisions. Reason: deer are more wary when predators are nearby. **Story. Report.**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

In a national ranking of housing costs vs. wages, **Austin** placed fifth in the US in terms of places where affordability is falling fastest among the top 50 markets. According to city data, the Texas Capital would have to develop 13,000 affordable units per year to get back on its schedule. **Story. Report.**

Low-cost Mexican airline Viva Aerobus announced an **Austin** service to/from **Mexico City** and **Monterrey** last week (**here**), but the news came just as the Federal Aviation Administration downgraded Mexico's flight safety rating - although even the agency said air operations were safe; they critiqued some oversight issues. **Story.**

A surge in US imports by container ships - up 30% year-over-year from 2019-2020 - has resulted in a corollary surge in lost containers: since November 2020, nearly 3,000 shipping containers have fallen overboard into the Pacific Ocean. Weather and poor design are primary culprits, but new technology may make commercial recovery possible, according to an industry-newsletter. **Details.**

The **New Braunfels** Economic Development Corporation will help design the Dry Comal Creek Hike and Bike Trail, approving a contract last week for up to \$375,000 with **San Antonio**-based Bain Median Bain for the project. **Details.**

Thought of the Week

"The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark."

- Michelangelo

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