



Monday Morning Report

June 7, 2021

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee next meets by Zoom video conference on Wednesday, June 16, at 2:00 pm. Expect presentations from VIA on their upcoming development plans in **San Antonio** and also from the Great Springs Project, designed to interconnect natural springs in **San Antonio-New Braunfels-San Marcos- Austin**. To request an agenda item, council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: More than 2.1 billion vaccine doses have now been administered worldwide. Global cases reached 173,360,912 today, with 3,730,506 total deaths. US cases are at 33,363,364, with 597,631 deaths (6/7). ([Johns Hopkins](#)) Yesterday, Texas was reporting 2,524,212 confirmed cases with 50,639 fatalities, including in **Bexar County**: 184,607 cases with 3,583 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 11,490 cases with 218 deaths; **Comal County**: 5,855 cases with 301 deaths; **Hays County**: 18,898 cases with 217 deaths; **Travis County**: 83,910 cases with 1,028 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 40,025 cases with 480 deaths (6/6/21). ([TDHHS](#)).

INFRASTRUCTURE

In a parallel power-play to the Biden administration's big \$1.7-2.3 trillion infrastructure proposal (below), House Democrats in **Washington** have rolled out an enormous five-year, \$547 billion transportation bill that boosts spending on rail and transit while encouraging states to repair existing roads rather than build new ones. [Story](#).

Meanwhile, the current state-of-play for the Biden administration \$1.7-2.3 trillion infrastructure package remains in flux: Biden nixed a Republican counter-offer of a lower gross number, reduced his package by \$500 billion and lowered his corporate tax rate demand from 28% to 15%, but seemed unable to achieve a compromise by today's theoretical June 7 deadline (today) before moving toward the reconciliation process ([here](#)). Larger issues (the filibuster, discontent among progressives) are adding complexity. [Story](#).

The **Austin Chronicle** did a 'deep-dive' last week on neighborhood revitalization efforts involved in the re-building of Interstate 35 through **Austin** - the Capital Express Central project - within the context of a nationwide 'removing urban highways' movement, focusing in particular on the Palm District. Lots of details included on the thorniest issues attendant to reconstructing Austin's 'gnarliest highway.' [Story](#).

Amtrak is bringing back traditional white-tablecloth dining cars on longer routes west of the Mississippi, according to the **Washington Post**, including the Texas Eagle ([here](#)). Meanwhile, the agency announced that deployment of its next-generation Avelia Liberty high-speed trains for the Northeast Corridor is delayed for a year. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

'Big Tech is flocking to **Austin**. Big Finance is expanding in **Dallas. Houston**, the epicenter of the US energy industry, is diversifying away from Big Oil.' That's the way **Bloomberg News** sees the tilt toward

Texas, away from California and New York, in a wrap-up story about hedge funds and tech companies on the move. [Story](#).

In what would probably be the biggest land-use fight ever in a city notorious for them, **Austonia** newsletter suggests that there is a movement afoot to privatize West **Austin's** Camp Mabry for - wait for it - affordable housing. The newsletter reports that local developers are talking up the idea of a sale or lease of the valuable state-owned real estate in the midst of a growing housing shortage. [Story](#).

Autonomous truck-maker Aurora is scaling up operations in Texas, adding a second facility to the one currently hosting testing and modeling activities in **Dallas**. The company says it will move toward pilot tests on Texas highways later this year with a safety driver onboard and has already simulated more than 10,000 freight-bearing trips between **Dallas** and **Houston**. Blog post [here](#).

Newsletter **VisualCapitalist** has published an interesting 'map' of the World Wide Web that imagines the internet as a traditional globe and assigns space and colors according to the size and reach of various websites. The two top spots, unsurprisingly, are Google & YouTube (owned by Google). Six of the top ten slots are Chinese. [Map](#).

With most of the vote counted, **WSJ** reports President Obrador's Morena party fell well short of a two-thirds majority in the lower house in Mexico's mid-term elections yesterday (6/6), making it more difficult to carry out a left-leaning nationalist economic policy - and staunching what some saw as an autocratic drift. [Story](#). [Back Story](#). [Still More](#).

Five city council races in **San Antonio** were decided over the weekend via runoff elections on Saturday (6/5), resulting in the ousting of two incumbents and a victory for the first openly gay man to serve on the council. Election results [here](#). More on the races and analysis [here](#). [More Analysis](#).

The **New Braunfels** Chamber of Commerce has a new president. Jonathan Packer, a former VP at the **Austin** chamber will take over July 15 from the retiring (and longtime **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council friend) Michael Meek. [Details](#).

Elon Musk Watch: Tough week for Rocket Man. Two top safety groups yanked their endorsements after Tesla dropped radar from some models ([here](#)); a court battle emerged back at **Starbase** over Space X property in **Boca Chica**, Tx., ([here](#)); a **Bloomberg** article panned his Mars expedition as 'risky' (he helped, saying, "Honestly, a bunch of people will probably die at the beginning") ([here](#)); a federal lawsuit revealed child labor abuse allegations from cobalt mining operations in the Congo ([here](#)). And, he turns 50 this month (6/28).

Thought of the Week

"The real problem is not whether machines think but whether men do."

- B.F. Skinner

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