



## Monday Morning Report

June 8, 2020

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### INTERNAL

The next meeting of the Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council is scheduled for Wednesday, June 17 at 2pm via Zoom.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Worldwide confirmed cases reached 6,967,910 at 3:30 pm yesterday (6/7), with 401,368 deaths. US cases totaled 1,931,325 with 110,110 fatalities. (*Johns Hopkins*) In Texas, state data sources placed estimated cases at just shy of 75,000, with 1,830 deaths. **Bexar County**: 3,290 cases, 78 deaths; **Comal County**: 117 cases, 7 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 147 cases, no deaths; **Hays County**: 385 cases, 5 deaths; **Travis County**: 3,662 cases, 97 deaths; **Williamson County**: 684 cases, 28 deaths. (*TDHHS*)

COVID-19 Data Analysis: As a percentage of population in Texas counties, **Moore County** in the Panhandle has the state's highest rate of infection, with over 3,000 cases per 100,000 people. **Travis County** ranks 6th of the major urban areas for infection, with 295 cases per 100,000; **Bexar County** ranked 25th, with 151 cases per 100,000 in population. (*Capitol Insider*)

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

Democrats in the US House introduced a \$500 billion 'green' transportation infrastructure funding bill last week (6/3), dubbed the Invest in America Act, that would expand public transit and triple funding for Amtrak. The bill's emphasis on major urban areas almost guarantees an uphill battle in the US Senate, where Republican leadership was highly critical of the measure. (*Story*) In other **Washington** news, the Trump administration issued an Executive Order (6/5) that directs federal agencies to use emergency authority to sidestep environmental regulations in expediting major infrastructure projects to spur economic recovery. (*Story*)

Pandemics throughout history have helped re-shape the design of cities from **London** to **Paris** to **New York** to **Philadelphia**, and the current COVID-19 epidemic suggests that public transportation hubs may be the most impacted, according to an architectural historian in the *Wall Street Journal*. If planners want to encourage density, they have to accept the associated dangers and design around them, he argues. *Opinion*.

New Texas Central Railway **Dallas-Houston** high speed rail project developments: the company abandoned its claims of totally private financing, saying they are now pursuing federal loans or stimulus funding; costs of the project have risen to \$30 billion - up \$10 billion since their last update (*here*). Also, the Federal Railroad Administration issued a final environmental statement on the project (documents in the link): *Details*. But the conservative National Review opines it is "*The Wrong Time for Another High-Speed Train Boondoggle*." *Opinion*.

**Austin**-area's CAMPO Policy Board meets by video conference *today* (6/8), at 2:00 pm, to discuss and take action on \$633 million in deferred projects associated with the recent re-direction of local regional project funding to the IH-35 Capital Expressway project through downtown. (*LIVESTREAM*)

**San Antonio** will postpone calling for a vote on expanded public transportation funding for the Via Metropolitan Transit agency, according to a 'State of the City' address last week by mayor Ron Nirenberg. He also predicted 'painful' budget cuts due to a \$200 million budget shortfall this year, an impact of the coronavirus. [Story](#).

The **San Antonio** Mobility Coalition's Executive Committee and Board of Directors meets today (6/8) at 1:30 by Zoom video conference. [Agenda](#). [Zoom Link](#).

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

A comprehensive climate action plan for **Travis County** approved unanimously last week (6/2), the county's first such plan, will focus on energy and water consumption, transportation and fuel usage, procurement and process improvements, and resiliency through 82 separate projects. Though no specific greenhouse gas reductions are required, the plan reflects general goals of the Paris Accord on Climate Change. [Story](#).

Still more criticism emerged yesterday (6/7) from food bank professionals about that \$39 million federal contract given to a **San Antonio** event planner: of 750,000 food boxes called for by June 30 under the contract within a seven-state area, only 235 had been delivered as of May 28, according to the **Express-News** - and those deliveries came three weeks behind schedule. [Details](#).

**San Antonio**'s response to the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent economic recovery were highlighted in a **60 Minutes** broadcast last night (6/7), with correspondent Scott Pelley reporting on 'a city walking a fine line between easing the devastating economic consequences of lockdown and the potential uptick in infections and deaths it could cause.' See *'The Long Siege'* [here](#).

Capital Metro in **Austin** released a sponsored package last week (6/3) on the economic impacts of the proposed Project Connect effort, estimating that 20,000 direct and indirect jobs would be created per billion dollars spent on the project. [Report](#). Cap Metro and the **Austin** city council have a joint meeting this Wednesday (6/10) to approve a Locally Preferred Alternative as part of the Project Connect process. [Agenda](#).

As governments across the globe race to develop stimulus-spending packages in response to economic damage from the coronavirus pandemic, Mexico's leftist president is rejecting pleas from national business leaders and bankers to respond in kind: "hostile toward bailouts, loath to take on public debt, and deeply mistrustful of most business leaders, [Lopez Obrador] has opted largely to sit tight, despite what is expected to be widespread pain." The **New York Times** reports [here](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"In some cases, non-violence requires more militancy than violence."*

— Cesar Chavez

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