



Monday Morning Report

June 17, 2019

INTERNAL

Chairman John Thomaides has determined that a June 19 meeting of the Executive Committee is unnecessary following a strategy planning sub-committee meeting last week and earlier meetings in **San Marcos** during April and May. The June 19 meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is therefore cancelled. A staff report on various projects and activities will be emailed to Executive Committee members later this month. For comments or concerns, email council@thecorridor.org.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Uber, the global ride-hailing company, announced plans last week to begin testing the first-ever commercial application of food delivery using unmanned drones in high-density urban areas. The initiative began in **San Diego** with test delivery of meals from McDonalds, and using subsidiary Uber Eats will expand this summer to other restaurants and cities. [Story](#).

In addition to delivering hamburgers and pizzas by air, Uber also recently announced plans to introduce, in **Dallas**, an air-taxi service for delivering people to their destinations. The company's vision for 'the city of the future' would incorporate autonomous air vehicles similar to helicopters that would pool riders with a common destination. They rolled out their plans in **Washington DC**, where regulators must approve their vehicles. [Story](#).

Forbes Magazine is out this month with an ambitious 'thumb-sucker' piece about the possible environmental impacts of future transportation mobility services using self-driving and electric vehicles. The article includes a handy model for calculating emissions from various forms of transportation and a brief synopsis of expected technology developments. [Story](#).

Austin city demographer Ryan Robinson says the 2020 Census presents 'one of the most daunting decennial efforts in modern history.' In particular, he worries about the impact of the current political climate on participation in the Census, especially a potential question on citizenship currently pending before the Supreme Court. He says next year's effort is underfunded, will feature under-trained census workers, and 'new and untested' phone and internet methodologies. [Story](#).

Rental car giant Hertz is testing a new subscription service in **Austin** and **Atlanta** designed to provide customers a new, different option to owning an automobile. Hertz My Car offers various levels of subscription starting at \$999 a month, with most tiers covering insurance, maintenance, damage and liability protection, and roadside assistance. Participants can trade out vehicles every month. [Details](#).

Texas Government Insider's Mary Scott Nabers writes this week about upcoming transportation projects being delivered through public-private partnerships, including **Denver's** \$1.3 billion I-70 expansion and the **Houston** \$2.9 billion Grand Parkway Project. She provides a brief overview of PPP projects across the US, noting that 39 states have enabled the use of a PPP delivery model, largely in an effort to get private sector capital into the infrastructure arena. [Column](#).

Gov. Gregg Abbott has signed a resolution merging three Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the **Rio Grande Valley** into one central planning agency, enabling the region to garner more state and federal funding. The resolution combines transportation agencies in **Brownsville, Harlingen-San Benito** and **Hidalgo County** into a single authority. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and 'Other' News)

Luxury bus operator Vonlane will expand its service between **Austin** and **Houston** this week, adding four new weekday departures to reach eight daily trips each way. Vonlane's buses offer WI-FI, noise-canceling headsets, satellite radio and television, and an onboard attendant. The company operates four trips between **San Antonio** and **Houston** daily weekdays. [Details](#). For schedules and costs, go [here](#).

You've probably heard that **San Antonio**-based hamburger chain Whataburger - which operates 828 locations in 10 states, with annual sales of \$2 billion - was sold to a Chicago investment bank last week ([story](#)). But you may not have heard as much about the bank that bought the chain, and their plans for expansion. That story is [here](#).

Too Good to Last: **Austin** city council members are vowing to repeal a long-forgotten city ordinance that allowed about 400 owners of pricey homes along Lake Austin waterfront to avoid city property taxes. The tax exemption was a legacy from earlier years when the city could not provide reliable police and fire services to the area. [Story](#).

The **San Antonio** Economic Development Foundation, through Market Street Services, is designing a new economic development plan for the region (which they define as **Bexar County, New Braunfels, Schertz, Converse**, and others) and want your help with a survey they are conducting. It takes about 10-15 minutes. [Survey](#).

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor lost a legend last week with the passing in **Austin** of Bill Wittliff, at 79, a gifted writer and founding pillar of the Texas film industry. Wittliff had screenwriting credits that stretched from '*Lonesome Dove*' to '*The Perfect Storm*,' but he was also well known as a photographer and book publisher. He and wife Sally founded the Wittliff Collection of literature and photography at Texas State University in **San Marcos**, and he will be missed by all who knew him. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"One thing life taught me: if you are interested, you never have to look for new interests. They come to you."

- Eleanor Roosevelt

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