



## Monday Morning Report

June 21, 2021

### INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council's Executive Committee met last week (6/16) for presentations on VIA's Keep San Antonio Moving plan and the Great Springs Project to preserve and connect springs in **San Antonio, Comal County, San Marcos, and Austin**. Also on the agenda: Henry Cisneros' new book, **'The Texas Triangle,'** Amtrak developments, the electric vehicles resolutions for **Travis and Bexar Counties** (below), a new 'Get There ATX' project with Austin, IH-35 improvements schedule for **San Antonio**, and updates on federal infrastructure legislation. Details at [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org).

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global cases reached 178,528,742 today, with 3,867,050 deaths. US cases are 33,542,382, with 601,825 deaths - roughly equal to the toll of the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic (6/21). (*Johns Hopkins*) As of yesterday, Texas was reporting 2,536,646 confirmed cases with 51,030 fatalities, including in **Bexar County:** 185,412 cases with 3,613 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 11,705 cases, still with 222 deaths; **Comal County:** 5,969 cases with 304 deaths; **Hays County:** 18,991 cases with 221 deaths; **Travis County:** 84,344 cases with 1,034 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 39,781 cases\* (data issue) with 482 deaths (6/20/21). (*TDHHS*).

### INFRASTRUCTURE

Despite increasing bipartisan dialogue about a major infrastructure funding bill, Democrats and Republicans in **Washington** are still circling the runway with no certainty yet about where they'll land. A new alternative emerged last week: a five-year \$974 billion package being shopped by Senate Democrats with close races this year; it's less than Biden wants but would avoid a reconciliation play on the eve of a debt-ceiling fight upcoming next month. Best 'state of play' articles [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

As expected, Amtrak's move to expand inter-city passenger rail service across the country - including in the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** - is facing a bitter battle with the Class 1 freight railroads (Union Pacific, BNSF, CSX, etc.) over access to their tracks. Amtrak has the right to operate on freight railroads and to receive priority for passengers over freight but, in reality, that has not happened. Now Amtrak is turning to the courts. [Story](#).

The Texas Supreme Court has sided with Texas Central Railroad, thus clearing the way for the Japanese-backed company to use eminent domain laws to acquire right-of-way along its proposed high-speed rail route between **Dallas** and **Houston**. Also, earlier this month, TCR announced a \$16 billion design deal with a **Milan, Italy** company ([here](#)). Opponents say they'll appeal the court decision. Pack a lunch: this one's not over yet. [Story](#).

**Austin** energy writer Robert Bryce posted a piece in *Forbes* magazine last week suggesting that the cost of winter storm Uri (otherwise known as the Snowpacolypse) electric grid blackouts to Texas rate payers will total nearly \$38 billion. He also estimated the death toll of the winter storm could reach 700. [Opinion](#). [More](#).

In 2004, UPS banned its drivers from making left turns, thus *annually* saving 10 million gallons of fuel, 20,000 tons of carbon emissions, and allowing their drivers time for an additional 350,000 deliveries. Is it time for cities to do the same thing? A Penn State researcher says 'yes.' [Opinion](#).

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Former **San Antonio** mayor and co-founder of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council, Henry Cisneros, has a new book out, *'The Texas Triangle, An Emerging Power in the Global Economy.'* Amazon calls it an 'important new study of a network of metropolitan complexes that are reshaping the destiny of Texas.' Former **Express-News** business reporter David Hendricks is listed as a co-author. You can order it [here](#).

A new state pension reform measure became law over the weekend (6/18), committing the Texas Employees Retirement System to fully financing about \$14 billion in currently unfunded promises made to existing and former employees and putting new employees into revised, 'cash balance' system. [Story](#). [More](#).

**Bexar** and **Travis Counties** both adopted resolutions last week (6/15) to begin a transition that will electrify their vehicle fleets as a response to automobile-generated air pollution along the IH-35 **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** and global climate change. Commissioners Brigid Shea & Justin Rodriguez led the effort, urging other local governments in the region to follow suit. [Story](#).

Citing a sample tree-planting operation in **Manor**, the **Austin Monitor** last week highlighted an innovative carbon-credit trading program by the non-profit group TreeFolks, which plants trees to offset carbon emissions and earns credits that it sells onward to organizations or cities - such as **Austin** - wishing to reduce their carbon footprint. [Story](#).

Fears of rising inflation in a post-pandemic economic boom began to ease last week as one key indicator - the cost of lumber - dropped. A surge in demand from do-it-yourselfers trapped at home during COVID and supply-chain issues had led some to believe that rising costs for housing would filter through the larger economy, but the **New York Times** reports the industry has responded with increased production that's driving prices down. [Story](#).

'I'll take Refugio for \$100, Alex': Ever puzzled about how to pronounce the same curiously named Texas town? The **San Antonio Express-News** has once again reached back to a 1940's academic work for the correct pronunciation of Iraan and 2300 other Texas placenames. [Story](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"To succeed, you need to find something to hold on to, something to motivate you, something to inspire you."*

- Tony Dorsett

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