



Monday Morning Report

June 22, 2020

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council met last week (6/17) by videoconference for a presentation on COVID-19 regional impacts on traffic congestion, updates on various projects, a briefing on the Invest Act (transportation funding), status on transit votes in **Austin** and **San Antonio**, and recent developments involving **Houston-Dallas** high speed rail. Presentation slides [here](#).

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global cases stood at 8,843,418 with 465,475 deaths as of yesterday (6/21) at 1:30 pm. The US had 2,268,093 confirmed cases with just shy of 120,000 fatalities. ([Johns Hopkins](#)) Texas had reported cases of 107,735 and 2,165 deaths as of 6/20 (Saturday) at 3:30 pm but given reporting lag times the numbers are somewhat suspect as of this morning (6/22). **Bexar County:** 5,962 reported cases, with 96 fatalities; **Comal County:** 240 cases, and 7 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 311 cases, with their first death; **Hays County:** 1,551, with 5 deaths; **Travis County:** 5,286 cases, with 108 deaths; **Williamson County:** 1,159 cases, with 32 deaths. ([TDHHS](#))

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Invest Act, this year's re-write of the federal transportation funding bill, went through its mark-up in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee last week (6/17) and was forwarded to the full house for action over the weekend. Referred to as a 'green' transportation bill by some in **Washington**, the measure contains as of now a tripling of funding for Amtrak and raises highway and transit funding by 46%. [Story](#).

According to [data](#) released by INRIX last week, US traffic has rebounded to 90% of pre-COVID-19 levels in most US urban areas, boosted by people avoiding public transit due to coronavirus fears. Their figures also show that long haul truck traffic in Texas is down by 12%. Local fleet delivery truck traffic is only down an average of 2% nationwide. The dataset shows state figures and some US urban areas. [Data](#). [Story](#).

The European Union's 2 trillion-euro economic recovery package - an effort to rebuild European economies in the aftermath of the pandemic - may include a series of massive infrastructure projects, including one proposal to build some ultra-high speed train routes such as from **Sicily** to **Brussels**. The proposal comes from the **Vienna** Institute for Economic Studies, a frequent resource for European policymakers. [Story](#).

You can access a podcast discussing *'The Future of Inter-Connected Vehicles'* with Bryan Mulligan, president of Applied Information, which also touches on the relevance of Space X's recent multi-satellite launch to the development of advanced traffic modeling [here](#).

Texas will be one of eight states joining nine companies in a federally sponsored coalition to cooperate on Automated Vehicle Transparency and Engagement for Safe Testing (AV TEST) - basically sharing test data on driverless vehicles, **Washington** officials announced last week. [Details](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Dallas-based American Airlines announced plans to raise \$3.5 billion in private stock offerings and debt instruments to outlast the coronavirus pandemic, small change compared to the \$16 billion Southwest Airlines has already raised this year. **Omaha** sage Warren Buffett warned last year: "They are saying... 'You've got to put more money into this business if we're going to be able to continue.'" [Story](#).

Officials in **Travis County** are considering \$14.6 million in property tax rebates over 10 years to lure Tesla's billion-dollar truck-manufacturing 'gigafactory' to the **Austin** area, local media reported last week. Also, reportedly under consideration: \$68 million in tax rebates from the **Del Valle** school district. [Details](#).

A Small Business Administration official visiting **Dallas** last week (6/12) predicted more economic stimulus spending out of **Washington**, particularly if a second wave of COVID-19 emerges. Jovita Carranza, SBA administrator, indicated that a third tranche of Paycheck Protection Program funding may be on its way. [Details](#).

"Are Universities Going The Way of CD's and Cable TV?" that's the question Michael D. Smith, an information technology specialist at Carnegie Mellon University in **Pittsburgh** is asking this morning in **The Atlantic**, using entertainment media examples to argue that students won't pay for pricey degrees if they are only available via live streaming. [Opinion](#).

Policy analysts at McKinsey & Company have examined government responses to past economic crises over the last century and found three themes of a successful response: prioritize human welfare and capital, take into account preexisting economic trends and plan long term policy accordingly, and start recovery response to acute crisis as early as possible. Worth reading. [Study](#).

In a bold move last week, **Bexar County** judge Nelson Wolff defied Gov. Greg Abbott by re-imposing an order to wear face masks in public spaces, eventually forcing the governor to capitulate - or at least clarify his own orders regarding faces masks. Wolff explains his actions to the **San Antonio Express-News** editorial board [here](#).

Thought of the Week

"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

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

©2020 Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council