



Monday Morning Report

July 20, 2020

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council met by video-conference last week (7/15) for updates on IH-35 highway projects in **Austin** and **San Antonio**, discussion of teleworking policies at the state and county levels, analyses of the TxDOT 2021 Unified Transportation Plan, developments on the Moving Forward Act and the Texas Central Railway project, and various updates on Council projects. For more, council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: There are 14,348,475 total confirmed worldwide cases with 603,285 deaths as of 12:30 pm yesterday (7/19). US cases are at 3,739,726 with 140,255 fatalities. ([Johns Hopkins](#)) Texas was reporting 317,730 cases and 3,865 estimated deaths as of 3:50 pm Saturday (7/18). **Bexar County:** 23,639 cases with 240 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 1,281 cases with 4 deaths; **Comal County:** 1,300 cases with 37 deaths; **Hays County:** 3,865 cases with 17 deaths; **Travis County:** 17,215 cases with 196 deaths; **Williamson County:** 4,490 cases with 67 deaths. ([TDHHS](#))

INFRASTRUCTURE

The National League of Cities is highlighting three elements of the Moving Forward Act as highly beneficial to urban areas: Build American Bonds, reauthorizing Advance Refunding Bonds, and the New Markets Tax Credit. Passed by the House on July 1, the \$1.5 trillion Moving Forward Act lashes together several infrastructure investment bills and awaits Senate approval. Examples of how these programs benefit cities include projects in **San Antonio** and **San Marcos**, nine Texas cities in all. [Opinion](#).

President Trump launched another 'Infrastructure Week' (sort of) in **Atlanta** July 15 with a speech entitled *'Rebuilding America's Infrastructure: Faster, Better, Stronger,'* that essentially announced the dismantling of about 100 environmental clearance regulations for federally funded projects. The White House released a transcript of his remarks, which are remarkable in many, many ways. Read it [here](#). [More](#).

Reversing an earlier decision, the federal Surface Transportation Board has ruled that the Texas Central Railway high-speed rail project between **Dallas** and **Houston** is subject to the Board's regulatory authority because it has reached through-ticket and transfer arrangements with Amtrak. The Board also specifically noted that the decision does not impact eminent domain issues that have plagued the project. [Story](#). Not everyone was pleased with the decision, including Texans Against High-Speed Rail. [More](#).

A columnist for the **San Antonio Express-News** is asking a question much on the minds of worried transportation advocates these days: 'In a coronavirus-induced recession, should highway spending keep its protected status?' In the process, Michael Taylor provides a helpful primer on state highway transportation policy and concludes that it's worth considering whether we should prioritize highways over everything else. [Opinion](#).

VIA Metropolitan Transit's board and the mayor of **San Antonio** have achieved a compromise on November ballot initiatives that will provide more funding for the transit agency and fund COVID-19 pandemic recovery efforts, including robust workforce training programs. In play is a one-eighth-of-a-cent

sales tax that will first fund recovery efforts, then flow to VIA for transit. [Details](#). More from the mayor [here](#).

Three of the state's Most Congested Roadways in Texas along **Austin's** Loop 360 are moving into the design phase and are scheduled for construction between 2022-26, a phased approach that will eventually impact nine intersections on a 14-mile stretch of the highway south and west of the city. [Details](#), left hand column.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Move over, Tesla: the startup upstart Rivian has raised a total of \$6 billion to compete with Tesla and Nikola in a race-to-market for the first all-electric pickup truck. Amazon, an investor in the venture, has already pre-ordered 100,000 vehicles from the company's manufacturing plant in **Normal, Ill.** ([Story](#))

The chairman of the **San Antonio** International Airport's Development Committee has a plan for the 36-year old Terminal A at the city's main airport: tear it down and start over. But not anytime soon. "We are still waiting for the dust to settle to see what a post-COVID-19 world looks like," he said. Other plans could involve a new, third terminal. [Story](#).

The days of 8% rent growth are likely in the rear-view mirror for the pandemic-impacted **Austin** high-end real estate office space market, according to a report in the *American-Statesman*. Prices have ticked up slightly despite the pandemic, but occupancy rates have edged downward since last year. [Details](#).

The 2020 **Comal County** Fair and Rodeo, billed as the largest in Central Texas and set for September in **New Braunfels** along the Guadalupe River, has been canceled due to coronavirus concerns. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"We have always held to the hope, the belief, the convictions that there is a better life, a better world, beyond the horizon."

— Franklin D. Roosevelt

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