



Monday Morning Report

July 27, 2020

INTERNAL

COVID-19 UPDATE: There are now 16,177,308 total confirmed worldwide cases of COVID with 645,699 deaths as of 12:00 pm yesterday (7/26). US cases topped 4,409,000 with 146,722 fatalities. ([Johns Hopkins](#)) Texas did not update numbers yesterday, but as of 3:00 pm Saturday (7/25), the state was reporting 375,846 total cases with 4,885 estimated deaths. **Bexar County**: 29,826 cases with 313 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 1,519 cases with 6 deaths; **Comal County**: 1,539 cases with 45 deaths; **Hays County**: 4,133 cases with 24 deaths; **Travis County**: 19,177 cases with 241 deaths; **Williamson County**: 5,203 cases with 90 deaths. ([TDHHS](#))

COVID-19 Data Risk Calculation Tool: Georgia Tech has developed a useful data tool allowing users to calculate the risk level of attending an event of any given size (10-10,000), in any US county. The risk level is the estimated chance that at least one COVID-positive individual will be present, given the size of the event. A gathering of 10 people, for example, in **Bexar County**, currently carries a 56% risk level; **Travis County** has a risk level of 38%; **Hays County** has a 29% risk level; **Comal County**, a 39% risk level; **Williamson County**, a 25% risk level. Access the tool [here](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

High-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes are coming to **San Antonio** this fall, part of a cooperative agreement between VIA Metropolitan Transit and TxDOT. HOV lanes are reserved for vehicles with two or more occupants but particularly effective for buses, carpools, and first-responders (firetrucks and ambulances). First up is a five-mile section in both directions on IH-10 between La Cantera and FM 3351 (Ralph Fair Road). More HOV lanes on US 281 are scheduled to open in 2021. [Details](#). For more on the effectiveness of HOV lanes, go [here](#).

Capital Metro is scaling back the size and cost of the light rail proposal that the agency intends to put before **Austin** voters in November, trimming about \$3 billion off the initial projected cost of \$10 billion. Details of the reduced package can be found [here](#). Meanwhile, political action committees have formed on each side for the upcoming election, most peopled with familiar names and faces from past local transit battles. [Story](#).

With transit elections coming to both **Austin** and **San Antonio** later this year, voters may want to examine the effects of transit on our neighbors to the north: **Dallas** Area Rapid Transit released a study last week analyzing the economic impacts of transit-oriented development around its rail stations, concluding that 81 projects between 2016-18 generated \$10.3 billion to the regional economy, including \$300 million in increased tax revenues. [Story](#).

The current chairman of TxDOT, **San Antonio's** Bruce Bugg Jr, is extensively profiled in an **Express-News** interview last week that reveals a fairly personal side of the banker, civic and political leader, and patron of the arts. Son of a casket maker and father of a Christian rock musician, Bugg calls himself a 'preacher of relationships.' [Story](#).

New research published last week narrows the range of predicted global temperature increases due to rising carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The new projections suggest increases of 4-10 degrees of global warming as atmospheric CO2 approaches doubling. "We've ruled out 'we'll be fine,' and we don't think 'doom' is very likely." [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

By now the entire world knows Tesla is coming to **Austin** with a \$1.1 billion, 5000-employee 'gigafactory' for its electric vehicles, with local reporting on the known numbers [here](#), the company's history [here](#), and a project timeline [here](#), but you may not know much about the enigmatic Tesla founder, Elon Musk. A fascinating profile of Musk ran this weekend in the **New York Times**, worth reading. [Interview](#).

Due to the COVID pandemic, two big event cancellations were announced last week: the annual Formula 1 Grand Prix race at **Austin's** Circuit of the Americas [here](#); and the 60th annual Wurstfest celebration in **New Braunfels**. Wurstfest, previously set for November, had hoped to recover from last year's devastating fire that damaged or destroyed some of their facilities. [Details](#).

Although the Trump administration's recent effort to limit the counting of immigrants in the 2020 Census is probably doomed to failure in the courts, the impact - if enacted - would have serious repercussions for the makeup of the US Congress: California, Florida, and Texas would likely all lose House seats in **Washington**. The Electoral College would also be impacted. At least four lawsuits have been filed in opposition. [Story](#).

Intel-subsiary Mobileye and the Ford Motor Company have formed a new partnership to put self-driving and new safety features into Ford's next generation of cars and trucks worldwide. The technology involved is camera-based and aids drivers with pedestrian and vehicle detection as well as lane-keeping features. [Details](#).

A long-simmering debate about the role regulation should play in the growth of internet commerce will come to a head this week in **Washington** Wednesday (7/29), when the executive of four top 'Big Tech' companies face a Congressional committee. CEO's of Facebook, Google, Amazon, and Apple - representing a \$5 trillion slice of the US economy - will appear before lawmakers asking if it's time for antitrust legislation aimed at breaking them up. [Story](#).

When the **New York Times** published Sen. Tom Cotton's opinion piece that suggested sending federal troops into US cities to quell rioters last month, a firestorm erupted; the paper defended running the piece but fired the editor responsible. When the **New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung** faced a similar situation over a Black Lives Matter-letter, the editor - Chris Lykins - did something smarter and braver: he apologized. [Opinion](#).

Thought of the Week

"Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards."

— Soren Kierkegaard

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