



Monday Morning Report

August 10, 2020

INTERNAL

COVID-19 UPDATE: The global case count is now 19,730,013 with 728,549 deaths as of 3:30 pm yesterday (8/9). US cases topped 5,033,960 with 162,833 fatalities. (*Johns Hopkins*) Texas, as of 3:00 pm Sunday (8/9), was reporting 486,362 total confirmed cases with 8,459 deaths. **Bexar County**: 35,037 cases with 782 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 1,679 cases with 55 deaths; **Comal County**: 1,839 cases with 69 deaths; **Hays County**: 5,012 cases with 38 deaths; **Travis County**: 22,602 cases with 261 deaths; **Williamson County**: 6,245 cases with 93 deaths. (*TDHHS*)

COVID-19 Data Issues Update: Death reports are differing between state and local authorities, leading to 'head-spinning discrepancy.' More on agency reporting mechanics - some of which relate to county residency verification - explained [here](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

The news site **Axios** will host a virtual panel discussion on the '*Future of Autonomous Vehicles*' tomorrow (Tuesday 8/11) at 11:30-12:30 Texas time featuring academics, engineers, public policy experts and, interestingly, the national president of Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Registration required, [here](#).

In the wake of lower traffic volumes because of the pandemic, many cities (including **Austin**) began reclaiming mostly deserted local streets for pedestrians, bikes, and open-air dining. Now that traffic is slowly returning, urban areas such as **New York** and **London** face an even larger dilemma over re-purposing streets to serve as outdoor classrooms for schools. [Story](#).

This morning's **Washington Post** says that transportation in their region is in historic turmoil, citing a funding crisis for transit and the rise of telework - but the trends cited could apply anywhere across the country, where ridership and state and local budgets have been gutted by the pandemic. "The entire context for everything has just completely changed," says Robert Puentes, of the Eno Center for Transportation. [Story](#).

Mayor Steve Adler of **Austin** delivered his 2020 '*State of the City*' address last week (8/5), this year's edition focused on policing and the public safety budget, COVID risk and recovery, homelessness, reparations to people of color, and a strong pitch for transportation (including Project Connect's light rail plan). [Details](#).

The city of **Austin** and Capital Metro reached agreement last week on a management and financial structure to implement the Project Connect transit plan by creating the Austin Transit Partnership. The plans also include a Contract With Voters on how Project Connect would be phased and funded. If adopted this week, the plan will also include a tax rate increase to be approved by voters in November. Full details [here](#).

\$8.2 million in construction work began last (8/4) week to reduce congestion on IH-35 between **Austin** and **Round Rock** from Grand Avenue Parkway to SH 45 North, with entrance/exit ramp implications for **Cedar Park** and **Pflugerville**, according to TxDOT. [Details](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

San Antonio's mayor Ron Nirenberg is moving forward with a robust economic development plan for a post-pandemic recovery. Details have not been firmed up yet, but the basic outline calls for a \$154 million investment over four years, generated by a 1/8th-cent sales tax re-directed towards job training and higher education for people who lost jobs due to COVID-19. The plan will be packaged with increased funding for local transit. [Story](#).

The same week that the US State Department issued a "Do Not Travel" warning for all of Mexico due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a series of glitches hit the country's main tourism website and an advertising campaign for **Acapulco** that featured the city's nightclubs - which have been shuttered by the national government. [Details](#).

Tesla's decision to build a \$1 billion, 5000-employee factory in the Del Valle area of **Travis County** has drawn new attention to a neighborhood with 'No libraries, no community centers, no public spaces for families to enjoy, and [with] the primary park behind barbed wire fences,' according to one official. Now, though, new jobs, retail options, and housing are all expected to cluster around the Tesla plant. [Story](#).

Efforts by local governments to limit evictions during the COVID-19 pandemic have been nixed by Texas attorney general Ken Paxton, who said in a letter opinion last week that such measures were a 'rewriting of state law.' His position seemed directed at jurisdictions such as **Austin** and **Travis County**, both of which have extended eviction suspensions until at least Sept. 30. [Story](#).

The **Rivard Report**, founded eight years ago by former **San Antonio Express-News** editor Robert Rivard, has changed its name to the **San Antonio Report**, but remains focused on local journalism. The daily newsletter's staff has grown from a husband-and-wife team to nearly 30 professional employees. [Details](#).

One of the country's most-respected administrators, former **San Antonio** city manager Sheryl Sculley, has released a book - "*Greedy Bastards*" - on her experiences in the Alamo City, primarily focused on her efforts to address police and fire-fighters union contracts, which she says would have bankrupted the city by the 2030's. She'll do a virtual interview tomorrow (8/12 at 12:00 pm). Register [here](#). More on the book [here](#).

New Braunfels is preparing to welcome home the body of Lance Corporal Guillermo 'Willie' Perez, one of eight Marines killed last month (7/30) in that **San Diego** training accident involving an overturned amphibious landing craft. The local police and fire departments are coordinating on a funeral procession and flags will be lowered citywide. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving."

— Albert Einstein

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