



Monday Morning Report

August 16, 2021

INTERNAL

Because several committee members are traveling and there being no urgent business to conduct, the August meeting of the Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council has been postponed to our next regularly scheduled meeting date on Wednesday, September 15th at 2:00 pm. For questions or concerns contact council@thecorridor.org. We look forward to seeing you next month.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global confirmed cases reached 207,348,828 this morning (up 7 million since last week), with 4,365,505 deaths. US cases are at 36,680,287, with 621,636 deaths (8/16/21). ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Texas was reporting 2,808,388 cases yesterday with 53,091 deaths, including **Bexar County**: 212,968 cases with 3,770 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 13,658 cases, with 233 deaths; **Comal County**: 7,705 cases with 332 deaths; **Hays County**: 22,689 cases with 243 deaths; **Travis County**: 95,054 cases with 1,075 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 47,068 cases with 507 deaths (8/15/21). ([TDHHS](#)).

INFRASTRUCTURE

The US Senate in **Washington** approved \$66 billion in funding for expansions of Amtrak passenger rail services last week, but the money is just part of the battle ahead. As recent efforts to restore service along the **Gulf Coast** demonstrate, resistance from the freight railroads to more passenger service is going to pose major legal and regulatory challenges. The root question is which should have priority, people or freight? [Story](#).

The **Gulf Coast** is not the only region trying to provide new passenger rail service (above): After years of lying dormant, commuter rail plans are drawing new attention to other routes in Texas, including between **Austin-San Antonio** and the cities in between ([here](#)). There are a lot hurdles to overcome before Amtrak service can be expanded, including Union Pacific resistance, matching funding, and, oddly, TxDOT itself. [Story](#).

Texas Government Insider reports that Texas stands to receive \$26.9 billion in highway funding from the infrastructure spending bill passed by the US Senate last week, based upon previous formula funding allocations, and \$537 million for bridge replacements and repairs over five years. The state can also compete for portions of another \$12.5 billion for economically important bridges and \$16 billion for projects of national significance. [Story](#).

TxDOT is holding a public 'Open Comment' period on design aspects of the IH-35 Central Expressway through downtown **Austin** from August 10 to September 8th. For more information on the project visit the website ([here](#)) or participate by emailing your comments to capexcentral@txdot.gov.

Austin's Movability is hosting a virtual '*Better Commute Expo*' on August 28th from 11:00 am-1:00 pm, designed to connect employers and HR staff with various vendors of a wide array commuting solutions from bicycles to software management programs. It's all done online, and you can learn more [here](#). To register for the event, go to the Remo site [here](#).

The **Austin** Chamber of Commerce is holding a '2021 Regional Growth & Mobility Summit' featuring various local transportation agency officials on Monday, August 30, beginning at 2:30 pm. For information and to register, go [here](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Rapid population growth along the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** has come to the attention of the **New York Times**, which singled the region out for separate coverage last week in a wrap-up of 2020 Census Bureau data and referred to the growth rate in a headline as 'mind-blowing.' **New Braunfels** drew notice for a 44% population expansion and Kyle mayor **Travis Mitchell** is quoted: 'With growth come extreme challenges.' [Story](#).

With three straight months of spectacular US jobs numbers and the stock market at all-time highs, the **Dallas Morning News** said over the weekend that the nation is poised for a 'blockbuster' fall economically but warns that spiking COVID-19 numbers could derail one of the fastest and broadest economic recoveries on record. [Story](#).

Elon Musk Watch: Various media outlets are reporting that Elon Musk's The Boring Company is exploring a tunneling project from **Austin** to Bergstrom International Airport. Others say the company is looking at an **Austin-San Antonio** underground hyperloop connection. Still others have the company involved in Capital Metro's Project Connect or a **Dallas-Fort Worth** tunnel WITH a hyperloop. We're taking a wait-and-see. [Sample](#).

Thought of the Week

"The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails."

- William Arthur Ward

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