



Monday Morning Report

August 24, 2020

INTERNAL

Our friend and colleague Bruce Todd, former **Austin** mayor and an Executive Committee member of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council, is facing some tough health challenges - as revealed over the weekend in a sensitive Ken Herman column in the **American-Statesman**. Thoughts and prayers.

[Details.](#)

COVID-19 UPDATE: As of this morning there are 23,500,000 confirmed cases worldwide with 809,000 deaths. US cases topped 5,700,000 with nearly 177,000 fatalities. ([Johns Hopkins](#)) Texas was reporting 577,537 total cases with 11,370 estimated deaths as of yesterday (8/23), including **Bexar County:** 36,903 cases (SAT mayor reports as 45,255 [here](#)) with 998 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 1,858 cases with 66 deaths; **Comal County:** 2,275 cases with 93 deaths; **Hays County:** 5,250 cases with 52 deaths; **Travis County:** 25,640 cases with 331 deaths; **Williamson County:** 7,687 cases with 113 deaths. ([TDHHS](#))

New On COVID-19: Researchers in **Hong Kong** reported this morning the first apparent known case of re-infection in a patient with the coronavirus 4.5 months after the first episode. This raises concerns that immunity maybe be time-limited and complicates the search for a vaccine. [Details.](#)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Henry Cisneros, former **San Antonio** mayor and founder of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council, explains three local November sales tax ballot measures - pre-K education, workforce training, transportation to work (transit) - and urges support by voters to lift the economic prospects of a city hit hard by the pandemic. [Opinion.](#)

Austin formed a project team to advance the IH-35 'Cap and Stitch' effort as TxDOT moves through the design phase of the \$7 billion Capital Expressway rebuild through downtown. The city's Transportation Department, Corridor Programs Office, and Equity Office are all involved in a plan to depress the Interstate's main lanes and cover large sections with parks and public spaces, 'stitching' together Austin's east and west sides. [Story.](#)

Electricity blackouts that have hit California expose the fragility of the most-expensive and unreliable electric grid in North America and show the dangers posed by the 'electrify everything' movement to defeat global warming - according to **Austin**-based global energy writer Robert Bryce in **Forbes**. He says efforts to limit natural gas (and other carbon-based fuels) by local governments will trigger price hikes and exacerbate poverty. [Opinion.](#)

In other energy-related news, the town sometimes referred to as '**San Antonio's** beach,' **Port Aransas**, is battling efforts to develop a massive natural gas complex on nearby Harbor Island, even in a period when worldwide demand for the product is shrinking. The **Houston Chronicle** highlighted the issues involved yesterday. [Opinion.](#)

The Texas Transportation Commission meets at 11:00 am this Thursday (8/27) to approve the 2021 Unified Transportation Plan (including additional funding for IH-35 in **Austin**), the Texas Transportation plan 2050, and the Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority's 183A Phase III expansion project.

[Livestream](#). [Agenda](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Worth Watching: More than 550,000 presidential primary absentee ballots have been rejected thus far this year, outpacing 2016's 318,000 ballots rejected over the entire year. The trend is causing concerns because tens of millions more absentee ballots are expected to be filed this year because of the coronavirus pandemic. **National Public Radio** did the analysis, reported [here](#).

Top Air Force officials toured military facilities in **Austin** and **San Antonio** last week, highlighting the growing nexus of technology, cyber-security, training, and future war fighting capabilities developing in the Corridor. ([here](#)) And the Texas A&M System announced plans to develop a \$60 million joint complex/project with the **Austin**-based Army Futures Command, to be located in **Bryan**, aimed at future-of-war technology. [Story](#).

Back in September, California passed new legislation that changed the rules for deciding who could be classified as independent contractors versus employees, a measure with profound implications for many 'gig economy' jobs. The result is an impending game of chicken with ride-hailing companies Uber and Lyft that is poised for a clash similar to battles fought in **Austin** over finger-printing drivers. [Story](#).

Despite the current economic uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic, **New Braunfels** is still getting plenty of inquiries regarding new manufacturing or retail projects, reports economic development vice-president for the local chamber, Chester Jenke (also an Executive Committee member of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council). He discusses a wish-list of prospective projects including Sprouts, Trader Joe's, and Academy [here](#).

San Antonio's rich, 300-year history is revealed in an interesting package on the city's architecture currently displayed on the **Express-News** website. Structures still in existence include missions, military arsenals, and the homes of notable historical figures - including one owned by a short story writer more frequently associated with **Austin**, William Sydney Porter (O. Henry). Worth a look [here](#).

Thought of the Week

"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall."

— Nelson Mandela

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