



Monday Morning Report

August 30, 2021

INTERNAL

The next scheduled meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is Wednesday, September 15th at 2:00 pm by videoconference. For questions or contributions, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Confirmed global cases reached 216,603,365 today, with 4,504,642 deaths. US cases are at 38,799,396 with 637,540 deaths (8/30/21). ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Yesterday, Texas reported 2,991,219 cases with 55,371 deaths, including **Bexar County:** 229,831 cases with 4,000 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 14,587 cases, with 247 deaths; **Comal County:** 8,654 cases with 357 deaths; **Hays County:** 24,868 cases with 260 deaths; **Travis County:** 102,283 cases with 1,131 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 51,308 cases with 539 deaths (8/29/21). ([TDHHS](#)).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Will the riders return? A widespread, pandemic-driven shift to working from home has left the three busiest commuter rail systems in the nation (all in **New York**), struggling to reinvent themselves with less service, reduced fares, and new ticketing schemes. The implications, also seen in **Boston** and **San Francisco** - for public transit systems of all types could be profound, and expensive as ridership claws back from 90% losses. [Story](#).

There's still time to weigh-in on the IH-35 Central Expressway project through **Austin**. TxDOT is conducting an open comment period through September 24 for public input, and you can add your thoughts [here](#). For information on the project, visit this [website](#).

Transportation projects in **Comal** and **Guadalupe Counties** have gotten the green light from the Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization for funding in the 2023-26 funding cycle. Expansions of the Dry Comal Creek Hike and Bike Trail and Barbarosa Road in **New Braunfels**, and street improvements in **Seguin** were among the projects approved. [Details](#).

More dam problems emerged last week for the area around **Seguin**. A 90-year-old floodgate failed at Lake Gonzales, causing the small lake to 'de-water,' which is to say, drain - and Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority officials said there is no safe way to fix it and no ready money available to replace it. [Story](#).

After a year of problems with billing over-charging errors in the **Houston** area, TxDOT is cutting ties to the private system operator there of the TxTag toll system, IBM - but the company claims TxDOT itself is the problem. Grab some popcorn, this is going to take a while to resolve. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

The Federal Reserve will soon begin phasing out its pandemic-era stimulus measures - interest rates near zero and massive investments in bonds - which could spark higher borrowing costs and lower profits for

Wall Street's booming markets, according to **CNN Business**. New home mortgage rates could suffer, they say. **Opinion**.

Austin and **Boise** frequently see their cities highlighted compared & contrasted in national stories about population and booming economic growth, but **Austonia** newsletter says the similarities run far deeper, to greenspace, cultures, lifestyles, and politics. **Story**.

Despite opposition from Texas law enforcement, this Wednesday (9/1) launches legal 'permit-less carry' of firearms across the state and **San Antonio Report** founder Robert Rivard doesn't feel safer or freer but approaches the date 'with a sense of dread.' **Opinion**.

On the heels of an Initial Public Offering valuing the company at \$80 billion, start-up electric vehicle manufacturer (and potential Tesla-competitor) Rivian will invest \$5 billion in a new plant in Texas - possibly near **Fort Worth** - reports **Reuters**. The factory would create 7,500 jobs by 2027 and produce 200,000 vehicles per year. **Story**.

Elon Musk Watch: *Artificial Intelligence Day* last Thursday revealed Tesla not as an electric car company but as an AI company that also makes cars, signaled by release of their powerful D1 semiconductor chip, capable of performing 362 trillion floating-point operations per second. Add to that the humanoid Tesla Autonomous Bot (**here**), and news that the Full Self-Driving Beta will be available within a month (**here**), plus the foray into selling Texas consumers retail electricity (**here**), and even for Rocket Man it was quite a week. **More**.

Thought of the Week

"It is never too late to be what you might have been."

- George Eliot

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