



Monday Morning Report

August 31, 2020

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** Council Executive Committee will meet for its regular monthly meeting by Zoom conference on Wednesday, September 16, 2:00 pm. RSVP to council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: US confirmed cases have now reached just under 6 million, and the cumulative US death toll has reached 183,000. Globally, total cases of infection topped 25 million, with 846,871 deaths. (*Johns Hopkins*) Texas was reporting 610,354 total cases with 12,683 estimated deaths as of yesterday (8/30), including **Bexar County**: 37,814 cases with 1,086 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 1,899 cases with 72 deaths; **Comal County**: 2,353 cases with 95 deaths; **Hays County**: 5,361 cases with 56 deaths; **Travis County**: 26,316 cases with 356 deaths; **Williamson County**: 7,893 cases with 123 deaths. (*TDHHS*)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Last week's Hurricane Laura direct hit on Louisiana has revived interest in the so-called 'Ike Dike' to protect the Texas coast with a \$31 billion artificial barrier aimed at deflecting storm surges from, in particular, the **Houston** and **Galveston** areas (*story*). Now, a Rice University storm expert writes in the **New York Times** that Texas is 'running out of near misses' when it comes to major storms. *Opinion*.

At their meeting last week (8/27) the Texas Transportation Commission approved the Texas Transportation Plan 2050 and the 2021 Unified Transportation Plan. The long-term Plan includes the goals of cutting fatal crashes in half by 2035, transitioning government transportation organizations to 'mobility agencies,' and attaining zero net emissions from transportation by 2050. *Details*.

Austin's Transportation Department is seeking citizens to volunteer for service on the city's Pedestrian Advisory and Bicycle Advisory Councils. Learn more about the PAC *here*, or the BAC *here*.

The Federal Reserve Bank announced sweeping new changes last week for policing inflation and unemployment, tossing out the old 2% inflation target in favor of a more flexible policy easing inflation to relieve upward pressures on wages. But at least one old **Washington** hand is calling for the agency to be more vigilant about inflation. *Opinion*.

A mystery plane spotted a few years ago at Southern California's **Victorville** airport has finally been explained with an announcement last week by Otto Aviation that they had developed the Celera 500L, a six-person aircraft that flies at jet speeds but with twice the range and fuel costs eight times lower than similar aircraft. Take a look. *Story*.

And not to be outdone (above), a Japanese company, Skydrive, announced last week (*here*) that it had completed a manned flight of an electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, a prototype 'flying car' that can land within the space of two ordinary parking spaces. *Story*.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

State Comptroller Glenn Hagar estimated last month that the costs of COVID-19 in revenue losses to the state government of Texas could total \$11.5 billion and yesterday's **San Antonio Express-News** detailed some of the sources of those lost revenues beyond just the expected sales tax and oil price slump costs. Even 'sin' taxes have been impacted. [Story](#).

A massive residential development proposed along Honey Creek north of **Bulverde** off State Highway 46 is raising the ire of local ranchers in **Comal County**. Environmentalists are opposing a permit under review by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality for development of an area called a 'pristine example' of the Hill Country before the Europeans arrived. [Story](#).

Among the most irksome costs for travelers are the airlines' fees for changing your travel dates, usually at least \$200 per ticket. United Airlines announced this week that they are dropping change fees 'forever,' and the move could force other major US carriers like Delta and American Airlines to follow suit. [Video](#).

Feedback loops are familiar to environmental scientists but an **Axios** writer has identified seven major loops that are impacting global climate change: air conditioning; water evaporation; permafrost; albedo effects; wildfires; policy and economic paralysis; and world geopolitics. They reveal a lot about why we're losing the battle. [Details](#).

The city of **Kyle** will seek voter approval (on the Nov. 3 election ballot) to finance the construction of a \$37 million 64,000 sq. ft. Public Safety Center to house their police department and an emergency operations center. Expect an opening in early 2022 if the bonds pass. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"Experience is not what happens to you, it is what you do with what happens to you."

— Aldous Huxley

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