



Monday Morning Report

Labor Day Edition

September 8, 2020

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** Council's Executive Committee meets by Zoom video conference *next* Wednesday, September 16, at 2:00 pm. To add an item to the agenda or for additional information, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: As of this morning, confirmed cases worldwide topped 27 million, with nearly 900,000 deaths. US cases of infection surpassed 6 million, with over 190,000 fatalities. (*Johns Hopkins*) Texas was reporting 640,370 total cases with 13,492 estimated deaths as of yesterday (9/7), including **Bexar County:** 38,849 cases with 1,166 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 1,903 cases with 74 deaths; **Comal County:** 2,440 cases with 97 deaths; **Hays County:** 5,471 cases with 58 deaths; **Travis County:** 26,969 cases with 382 deaths; **Williamson County:** 8,024 cases with 131 deaths. (*TDHHS*)

COVID-19 Data Update: Claims last week that 90% of COVID deaths were attributable to so-called 'comorbidities' sparked controversy and put the increasingly suspect Center for Disease Control's methodology under the spotlight (*Story*). A Houston public policy commentator discusses the issues in more detail [here](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Austin has developed a new Sustainability Plan - follow up to an earlier 2015 effort - that establishes a net-zero carbon emissions goal by 2050. Distinctive in the new plan are proposed measures to revise building codes to achieve net-zero by 2030 and to focus development and affordable housing on city centers and designated corridors. Transportation proposals include more free transit and limiting free parking. *Story*.

No current highway projects in Texas have been yet impacted by the COVID-19-generated recession, but the *Express-News* warns this morning that pandemic lockdowns will eventually cut into the sales and gasoline taxes that provide the lion's share of state transportation funding. Some good news: people driving less has given TxDOT the opportunity to expedite a lot of projects without impeding traffic. *Story*.

The **San Antonio** Mobility Coalition hosts their annual '2020 State of the District' event tomorrow (9/9) beginning at 11:30 am, highlighting activities of the Alamo Area TxDOT District and featuring TxDOT chairman Bruce Bugg Jr. along with opening remarks from **Bexar County** judge Nelson Wolff and mayor Ron Nirenberg. You *may* be able to register [here](#).

Fifty years after discussions of the project first began, **Burnet County** commissioners are moving forward on a new \$30 million bridge over Lake LBJ east of the existing Wirtz Dam. The span will connect RM 2147 in **Cottonwood Shores** to RM 1431 between **Granite Shoals** and **Marble Falls**. As they say, all things come to those who wait. *Story* (halfway down, left column).

New Braunfels is expected to go out for bids this month on a new \$36.31 million police station to replace existing facilities (and including a new Veterans Memorial). The 65,000 sq. ft. main building and 15,000 sq.ft. annex will take 18 months to build, beginning in 2021. [Details](#).

Emergency responders in **North Texas** have begun using Waze traffic app data to report accidents - rather than relying on 911 calls - after finding that 40% of the time, Waze reports crashes almost five minutes faster than traditional 911 calls. The data thus far covers more than 10,000 accidents in **Dallas-Fort Worth** alone. [Details](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Financial website **WalletHub** says Texans are among the hardest working among US residents, fourth in productivity behind North Dakota, Alaska, and Wyoming. The state ranked 14th in commute-to-work times and 26th in unemployment, according to a study comparing 50 states across 10 different indicators. [Details](#).

Hotel and motels in **Austin** are pivoting from the hard-hit tourism industry - with travel decimated by the COVID-19 pandemic - to renting temporary office space for workers unable or unwilling to work from home anymore. Properties offering workspaces in **Central Texas** include Native Hostel, Proper Hotel, Hyatt Regency Lost Pines Resort (**Bastrop**), and the South Congress Hotel. [Details](#).

An **Omaha**-based company, ETruck Transportation, has begun converting diesel-powered trucks to fully electric power in a 40-hour process for which it has already received 200 orders from a mainline **Chicago** freight company. Deliveries are expected to start next year. [Details](#).

In a trend that bodes ill for public transit, US auto dealerships are reporting unprecedented demand for used cars. Analysts say the demand is spurred by commuters' pandemic-inspired fear of riding buses, trains, and ride-hailing services. Prices have shot up 22% since last year, the **New York Times** reports [here](#).

The ABC television network is launching a new series that will feature **Austin** - among others - emergency center operators later this month. 'Emergency Call,' to be hosted by Luke Wilson, will follow communications personnel from the **Austin** and **Travis County** law enforcement and 911 teams. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"No work is insignificant. All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence."

— Martin Luther King, Jr.

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