



Monday Morning Report

December 6, 2021

INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, December 15, at 2:00 pm, by Zoom videoconference. For more information, query council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global cases are just shy of 266 million as of this morning, with 5,258,654 fatalities. US cases have reached nearly 50 million, with 788,364 deaths (12/6/21) (*Johns Hopkins*). Yesterday, Texas was reporting 3,592,874 confirmed cases with 72,986 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 269,682 cases with 5,282 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 18,000 cases, with 346 deaths; **Comal County**: 11,680 cases with 468 deaths; **Hays County**: 30,428 cases with 356 deaths; **Travis County**: 122,511 cases with 1,475 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 67,338 cases with 730 deaths (12/5/21). (*TDHHS*).

INFRASTRUCTURE

The **Houston Chronicle** reports that Interstate 45 between **Houston** and **Dallas** has become one of the nation's premier test routes for autonomous trucks, some already operating without a safety human driver present. The article surveys current efforts by UPS, FedEx, and others as they respond to a nationwide driver shortage. *Story*.

In a cautionary tale for big infrastructure advocates everywhere, **Harris County** will pay nearly \$300 million more, including \$50 million to demolish existing structures already built, to fix design flaws in their \$1 billion tolled Ship Channel Bridge Project. Problems with the design firm's efforts drew additional scrutiny after issues arose with the **Corpus Christi** Harbor Bridge project and the 2018 collapse of a **Miami**-area pedestrian bridge. *Story*.

The Jet, a \$99 bus trip from **New York** to **Washington DC**, demonstrates what bringing the private plane experience to bus travel might offer, reports the **Washington Post**. Could free WiFi, food and drinks plus Bose-designed motion-canceling seats (and HOV lanes on IH-35) potentially service the **Austin-San Antonio** commute? *Story*.

The Democratic Republic of Congo controls two-thirds of the world supply of cobalt - a chemical element vital to electric vehicles like locally-made Teslas, which can each require up to ten pounds - and the **New York Times** reports how the thirst for cobalt put the small village of **Kisanfu** at the crossroads of global demand, economic warfare, and climate change. Included: Freeport-McMoran and hippo attacks. Worth reading. *Story*.

Faced with a flood of new growth, the **Hays County** town of **Dripping Springs** has imposed a temporary moratorium on new building permits while city leaders develop a comprehensive plan to address rapid population growth and insufficient infrastructure. *Details*.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

San Antonio's attempts to launch effective jobs training programs in the wake of the COVID pandemic continue to catch flak from local media outlets and some city elected officials, despite overwhelming public support and the fact that the actual plan for the latest \$200 million effort has not yet been made public ([here](#)). More [Opinion](#).

The rental search site **ApartmentList** analyzed data from millions of queries by city-dwellers seeking to change metro-area homes and found that the overwhelming majority of people looking for new digs in **San Antonio** were from **Austin** (32.3%). **Houston** ranked second (20.2%), and **Dallas** third at 8.2%. [Story](#).

Housing affordability issues continue to haunt **Austin**, making national headlines ([here](#)) and prompting a special called city council meeting last week that generated four possible solutions: allow housing to be built in commercial zones; make it easier/cheaper to build accessory units ('granny flats'); streamline the permitting process; and advocate that universities build more student housing. All require land use code changes. [Story](#).

The retirement of **Bexar County** judge Nelson Wolff has triggered a free-for-all over possibly the most powerful governmental seat in **San Antonio**; veteran political reporter Gilbert Garcia handicaps the state-of-play in the race thus far [here](#).

Grim news for the Texas Coast: The 2021 Atlantic hurricane season did \$70 billion worth of damage within the US and a new study, using a heretofore unstudied historical climate methodology, indicates that this was the sixth consecutive year of increased storm activity (frequency) with more and worse (intensity) to come. [Story](#).

Music And Marshmallows: In the mood for something a little different this holiday season? Try "*Christmas at the Caverns*" in **New Braunfels**, a production with campfires, synthetic ice skating (?), music and food at the Natural Bridge Caverns, running for the next three weekends 4:30-9:30, and benefiting the local food bank. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people."

- Eleanor Roosevelt

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