



Monday Morning Report

December 9, 2019

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee is scheduled to meet Wednesday, December 18, 2:00 pm at the Council offices in **San Marcos** (304 North C.M. Allen Parkway). For questions or to add items to the agenda, email council@thecorridor.org.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Austin's Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will hear a presentation tonight (12/9) from consultants working on a high-speed rail project connecting the **Dallas-Ft. Worth** area to **Laredo**, with proposed stops in **Austin** and **San Antonio**. The **North Texas** Council of Governments leads the effort, which is now conducting a second round of environmental reviews. [Details](#).

The surge in e-commerce is fueling a commensurate increase in the number of delivery vehicles on city streets. In 2010, the US Postal Service alone (not counting FedEx or UPS) delivered 3.1 billion packages; last year, in 2018, they delivered more than 5.1 billion ([here](#)). Cities like **Washington DC**, **New York**, and **London** have limited delivery time windows and increased double-parking fines, but the problem persists. Now global city leaders are considering a 'delivery tax' to fund relief for congestion and air pollution due to deliveries. [Story](#).

A public policy think-tank has analyzed portions of an **Austin** transportation project overseen by the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and argues that elements contradict the city's own 'Smart City' goals by prioritizing traffic movement over pedestrians and bicycles. Their briefing focused on a TxDOT project at Stassney Lane and IH-35. [Details](#).

Three recent popular mainstream news sources are touting growth in the US freight rail industry while noting that prioritizing freight movement has choked the expansion of passenger rail services - even at a time when passenger demand is soaring. **Bloomberg News** charts show a surge in US freight demand (beginning at the time Union Pacific canceled agreements with Lone Star Rail) [here](#), while also highlighting Amtrak's trend toward profitability ([here](#)). Business magazine **Forbes** finds passenger rail the mode of the future ([here](#)).

The Texas Transportation Commission meets this week in **Austin** twice, first for a workshop Wednesday (12/11) on the 2050 Texas Transportation Plan and updates to the 2020 Unified Transportation Plan and Thursday (12/12) for an official Commission meeting. Agenda [here](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and 'Other' News)

The top three Texas state political leaders have argued that cities and counties should be prohibited from hiring lobbyists to influence the Legislature in **Austin** because taxpayer dollars should not fund issues some taxpayers may oppose. Arguably, House Speaker Dennis Bonnen was forced out over the issue. But, as the **Texas Tribune** points out, almost nothing government does has unanimous consent. [Opinion](#).

Emergency mutual aid agreements among fire and rescue departments were approved last week by **Austin** covering 19 different jurisdictions in **Travis** and **Williamson Counties**, but not without push back from some fire officials. [Details](#).

A **San Antonio** law firm has won a whopping \$13.5 billion judgement in court against California's electric power giant PG&E on behalf of victims of wildfires in 2017-18 that reportedly did \$30 billion worth of damage. Half of the settlement will be paid in cash, half in stock for the company, which has been reorganized after bankruptcy. [Story](#).

Urban studies for more than a decade have suggested that a resurgence of US cities was occurring at the expense of the suburbs - a trend that would amount to an historical reversal of the lifestyle preferences of Americans. *Wrong*. Comprehensive research for the **Manhattan Institute** over the last four decades tells a different story: suburbs outperform cities on a series of economic and demographic variables. [Details](#).

Terms expire tomorrow (12/10) for two members of a key dispute-handling committee of the World Trade Organization in **Washington**, effectively crippling the agency's ability to enforce its own rules, thus removing the primary mechanism for settling international trade disputes. In the midst of the Trump administration's effort to reorganize global trade rules, the move opens the door to wider tit-for-tat tariff wars. [Story](#).

A specialty metal fabrication company, United Alloy, will build a \$35 million manufacturing facility in **Seguin**, bringing about 100 new jobs to a city increasingly known for manufacturing, logistics, and distribution centers. The new 200,000 square-foot plant will be sited on 26-acres just south of Interstate 10. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"The great consolation in life is to say what one thinks."

- Voltaire

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