



Monday Morning Report

December 14, 2020

INTERNAL

State Rep. Celia Israel will be a guest for *this* Wednesday's video conference meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee, speaking about the upcoming Legislative Session and potential telecommuting legislation at 2:00 pm, December 16th. For more information, email council@thecorridor.org. Draft **AGENDA**.

COVID-19 UPDATE: US deaths will surpass 300,000 today, even as the first vaccinations begin this morning (12/14) for front line medical workers and US current infections exceed 16 million. Worldwide cases have now reached more than 72 million, with 1.6 million deaths. (**Johns Hopkins**) Texas reported 1,328,213 confirmed cases yesterday (12/13), with 23,911 deaths, including in **Bexar County:** 77,112 cases with 1,577 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 4,928 cases with 92 deaths; **Comal County:** 3,645 cases with 119 deaths; **Hays County:** 8,091 cases with 93 deaths; **Travis County:** 42,136 cases with 492 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 15,462 cases with 182 deaths. (**TDHHS**)

COVID-19 Hospitalization Update: **Austin** mayor Steve Adler warns that the city is in the early stages of a considerable virus surge that will stress local intensive care-unit hospital capacity (**here**).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Like a lot of groups right now, the Rocky Mountain Institute is calling for a massive influx of infrastructure spending from the new Congress convening in 2021. They add that cities need to play a key role in contextualizing, designing, and delivering these new projects, suggesting six sectors ready for action: access & mobility; buildings, power, broadband, water, and 'natural systems.' **Story & REPORT link.**

Detroit and **Berlin**-based think tank Assembly Ventures has assembled a report called *The Framework for Mobility 4.0* that looks at how existing infrastructure must change to keep up with technology and posits that the most dangerous and unpredictable element in a merged world of connected, autonomous vehicles will be the remaining human drivers. It's a thought-provoking look at where we are now. **Report.**

San Antonio hit the 'pause button' last week on a deal with Blink - a company ready to deploy electric vehicle (EV) charging stations around the city to serve about 4,000 local EV's - when city council members expressed doubts about the company's viability. Stock market short sellers have been trying to force down share prices in the company with an internet campaign of allegations that appear false. **Story.**

A number of road projects in Texas, including some along Interstate 35 in **Austin** and Loop 1604 in **San Antonio**, joined Fort Worth's Southeast Connector project last week on a list of "*Biggest Highway Boondoggle's In The US*" compiled by the Texas Public Interest Research Group, labelled by media as a 'watchdog group.' **Story. Report.**

Autonomous Vehicles Leap Forward: Amazon acquired self-driving start-up Zoox with a vision far beyond just delivering packages, namely, a robo-taxi service. Public roadway tests ongoing in **Shenzhen, Beijing, and San Francisco** are part of a columnist's survey of current autonomous car development. **Details.**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Software giant Oracle is moving its corporate headquarters to **Austin** from **Redwood City**, CA, continuing a seemingly endless stream of economic development wins for the city. The world's second largest software company, Oracle already had about 2,500 workers locally, and it's too early to say how many more this move could add, according to local officials. [Story](#).

More details emerged last week about Elon Musk's move to Texas, confirmed by the **Wall Street Journal**. Two of Musk's largest enterprises -Tesla and SpaceX - now have large boot prints in the Lone Star State. Although he didn't reveal where he was going to live, we doubt it will be **Boca Chica** (no disrespect intended). [Details](#).

The **Wall Street Journal** also (above) confirmed last week that **Austin** is receiving a flood of pandemic-related immigrants from places like **New York** and **San Francisco** - potentially 10,000 this year - seeking cheaper places to live yet offering loads of high-paying remote work job opportunities. "Few [cities] have benefited more than **Austin**," they report. [Story](#).

Our friends at **The New Localism** have designed a road map to post-pandemic recovery for cities and counties - complete with examples from **Chattanooga** to **Los Angeles** - that includes five steps: form a recovery task force; clearly outline plans & priorities; designate a federal liaison; scale fair and effective funds deployment; establish a local fund-leveraging intermediary. [Details](#).

Despite a recent vote of confidence for city and county officials in the Nov. 3rd elections for VIA Metropolitan Transit (with leadership issues unresolved [here](#)) and local workforce expansion programs, trouble is brewing in **San Antonio** petition drives regarding City Public Services ([here](#)) and the local police union, writes Bob Rivard in the **San Antonio Report**. 'Everywhere one turns, it seems, the status quo is being challenged.' [Opinion](#).

Hawaiian Airlines begins non-stop flights from **Austin** to **Honolulu** this April 22nd and is already selling tickets online for the twice-a-week service. Flights will depart Thursdays and Sundays at 10:10 am and land at 1:30 pm, **Honolulu** time. *Mele Kalikimaka*. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"Kindness is like snow. It beautifies everything it covers."

— Kahlil Gibran

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