



## Monday Morning Report

December 16, 2019

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### INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council meets *this* Wednesday, (12/18), 2:00 pm, at the Council offices at 304 North C.M. Allen Parkway in **San Marcos**. Good news: roadwork on C.M. Allen Parkway should be complete by then, allowing access to our offices from both north and south. Bad news: part of our parking lot has been turned into an ice-skating rink for holiday celebrations. Arrive early. **Agenda**. For questions or to add items to the agenda, email [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org).

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

Results of a study on modal alternatives to Interstate 35 from **Dallas-to-Laredo** - being led by the **North Texas** Council of Governments - were presented last week (12/9) to the **Austin** region's Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and outlined six different potential options (various forms of rail, bus rapid transit, and hyper loop technology). Despite the fact that it doesn't currently exist anywhere, hyper loop was the clear favorite of the project consultants ([here](#)). The presentation begins at point 25.15 on the video link: [Video](#).

As part of a presentation on Rural and Statewide Connectivity at the TxDOT Commission meeting last week (12/11) in **Austin**, the agency revealed a proposed upgrade to four lanes for 122-miles of US 281 from north of **San Antonio** to I-20. Pitched as a response to population growth and as a proposed alternative truck route for IH-35, the close-to-\$1 billion plan (unfunded as of now) anticipates by-passes for some of nine communities along the route. [Presentation](#).

'A stronger economy. More choices about where we live, work and play. A better overall quality of life.' **Bexar County** judge Nelson Wolff makes his strongest pitch yet for why **San Antonio** should shift 1/8-cent of sale taxes, currently funding watershed protection, to VIA Metropolitan Transit for an improved, state-of-the-art bus system. [Opinion](#).

Since the beginning of the climate change debates more than three decades ago, American railroads have painted themselves as the most environmentally friendly way to move goods over land. But recent analysis by **The Atlantic** suggests that, behind the scenes, major US railroads have been funding efforts by climate change deniers in order to preserve one of their largest customers, the coal industry. [Story](#).

Ford Motor Company is adding on to its self-driving car operations in **Austin**, adding new real estate facilities near the airport and bolstering its local fleet development and research. The Austin self-driving command center is the first of its kind, with **Miami** and **Washington DC** to come online soon, the company said. [Story](#).

**Houston's** West Loop claimed the top congestion spot in the state, with **Austin's** Interstate 35 a close second, in Texas A&M Transportation Institute's latest rankings (2019) of the most congested roadways in Texas. IH-35 on the border in **Laredo** - clogged by international trucking - took the third spot. [Details](#) (halfway down page).

The market for semiconductors could be the biggest winner in the mobility revolution disrupting the automotive industry - potentially quintupling over the next two decades - as automakers turn to new electric fuel sources, autonomous sensors and operating devices, and long-lasting solid-state batteries, according to a **Semiconductor Engineering** analysis available [here](#).

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and 'Other' News)

**Dallas**-based Southwest Airlines is adding additional flights to **Las Vegas, Atlanta, Nashville,** and **Denver** from **San Antonio** International Airport. [Details](#). **Austin** Bergstrom International Airport is also adding some new daily flights to **Boston** and **San Jose**, along with a new international flight on weekends beginning in May to **Los Cabos**, Mexico. [Details](#).

They may have a reputation as 'slackers,' but **Austin** workers made a list of the 28 US cities where workers come in to work sick sometimes (50%), or always (43%). **Houston** and **Dallas** also made the list, but not **San Antonio**. Something to think about when US officials estimate 45 million cases of the flu last year, and 65,000 deaths. [Details](#).

Last Monday marked the filing deadline for the March primary elections, so the battlefield for the Texas House and Senate in **Austin** is now set. The **Texas Tribune** has done a particularly thorough analysis of the prospects for both Republicans and Democrats on a district-by-district basis across the state, and **Austin** and **San Antonio** races could determine which party controls the House during the upcoming crucial redistricting year. [Story](#).

Former **San Antonio** city councilman Robert Marbut Jr, founder of the Haven for Hope on the city's West Side, has been appointed chief executive of the Trump administration's US Interagency Council on Homelessness, but not everyone is happy about it: 75 members of Congress signed a letter claiming he was 'unqualified, unprepared, and disdainful' of the agency he's tasked to lead. And there's more. [Story](#).

In 2015, **Georgetown** went 100% renewable for electric power and entered long term contracts, hoping to sell energy back to the Texas grid. Energy prices fell, utility customers saw increased rates to cover the costs, and now the city has called 'calf rope' (look it up). Once the largest US city to run completely on renewable power, **Georgetown** has now hired a Shell Oil subsidiary to manage its energy holdings. [Story](#).

Traci Anderson has been appointed as executive director of **Buda's** Economic Development Corporation. She previously had similar positions in **Sunnyvale, Pflugerville,** and **Taylor**. [Details here](#) (right column).

The **Marble Falls Highlander** and the **Burnet Bulletin** have a new publisher, Jeff Shabram, a veteran Hearst newspaper executive who served most recently with the **Midland Reporter-Telegram**. For details, go [here](#).

**San Antonio**, and the whole **Austin-San Antonio Corridor**, suffered a loss last week with the passing of Charline McCombs, wife of legendary business and civic leader Red McCombs, at age 91. A businesswoman and philanthropist in her own right, Charline championed more worthwhile causes than we have room to name. She will be missed. [Details](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"It is a good thing to be rich and a good thing to be strong, but it is a better thing to be loved by many friends."*

- Voltaire

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