



## Monday Morning Report

December 21, 2020

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### INTERNAL

At last week's meeting (12/16) of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council's Executive Committee the group adopted a preliminary 2021 legislative agenda after a presentation from State Rep. Celia Israel on proposed state worker telecommuting legislation; also discussed was upcoming legislation regarding electric vehicle deployment statewide. Updates on Council projects followed, including developments in the Connected and Autonomous Vehicles space, IH-35 Capital Expressway public comments, credit risks to local government from climate change, 2021 operating schedules, and Amtrak improvements likely under a Biden administration. For details, contact [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org).

**COVID-19 UPDATE:** A high-stakes race is now underway between the large-scale deployment of lifesaving vaccines and a deadly pandemic that is claiming the life of one American *every minute*. Global cases rose by five million last week to nearly 77 million today, with 1,695,307 deaths. US cases topped 17.8 million with 317,684 deaths (12/21). ([Johns Hopkins](#)) Texas reported 1,404,625 confirmed cases yesterday (12/20), with 25,348 deaths, including in **Bexar County:** 82,823 cases with 1,630 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 5,376 cases with 100 deaths; **Comal County:** 3,787 cases with 125 deaths; **Hays County:** 8,759 cases with 99 deaths; **Travis County:** 45,070 cases with 508 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 17,220 cases with 194 deaths. ([TDHHS](#))

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

Rather than leading with a contentious effort to reform health care as Obama did during his first term, President-elect Joe Biden's transition team seems to be leaning towards a massive public works financing measure to create jobs and fuel the flagging economy, reports [Axios](#). It's politics 101: Republicans loath to increase the deficit might be able to swallow a trillion-dollar infrastructure pill that includes big contracts for roads & bridges; Democrats want the union jobs and environmentally oriented spending that could result. [Details](#).

**San Antonio** International Airport officials are seeking to lengthen their main runway to make the facility more attractive to long-haul European passenger flights, city council members learned last week. The airport currently has no flights to Europe and the existing runway configuration can only service non-stops to **London** or **Frankfurt**. Officials said they expect international travel to recover from COVID setbacks in mid-2021. [Story](#).

That widespread computer hack of at least 40 US government agencies and large companies, revealed in **Washington** last week, now appears linked to security flaws in networking programs sold by the **Austin**-based SolarWinds software company. And apparently, for hacks or holidays, there's no place like home: officials revealed that **Austin** city government networks were among the earliest attacked. [Story](#). [More](#).

In the midst of TxDOT and the Federal Highway Administration's public comment period on the environmental reviews for the Capital Express Project on IH-35, the city of **Austin**'s Urban Transportation Commission has formed a working group to compile local suggestions for the expansion through downtown. [Story](#).

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

A new report issued last week inventories the current state of electric vehicles (EV's)/electric transportation-related (ET) activities in Texas finds: 7,100 Texas workers are involved, mostly in manufacturing, at 1,234 businesses in 203 counties. Within four years that workforce will grow to 13,500 because of Tesla in **Austin**. EV/ET activity contributed nearly \$690 million to Texas Gross State Product in 2016. [Report](#).

Recent announcements about tech company migration to **Austin** (Tesla, Oracle, Apple expansion, etc) prompted worldwide media recognition of the state capital as a workforce magnet ([here](#)), often citing California's high taxes and pandemic-related trends. But not so fast, claims industry newsletter **Big Technology**: citing data from *Linked-In*, they say less 'buzzy' cities like **Madison, Richmond, and Sacramento** are benefiting more. [Details](#).

Microsoft's Bill Gates and auto giant Volkswagen were both early financial backers of **San Jose**-based QuantumScope, a tech startup poised to revolutionize electric vehicle development and deployment with a recent breakthrough: non lithium-based, solid state batteries that re-charge to 80% of capacity in 15 minutes. [Details](#).

A **San Antonio Express-News** business columnist says Alamo City is no longer the top choice as headquarters site the new US Space Command, an economic development plum hotly pursued by city leaders. According to 'a rumor mill,' the columnist claims **Colorado Springs**, instead, is a 'decision all but made.' [Opinion](#).

**New Braunfels**-based Rush Enterprises is certainly feeling the Christmas spirit: North America's largest truck dealership network has announced a \$100 million stock buyback program and a \$500 Christmas bonus for each of its 6,300 nationwide employees. [Details](#).

**Bexar County**'s commissioners court said farewell to two veteran male members last week - Kevin Wolff and Chico Rodriguez - and welcomed, for the first time, two new female members, Rebeca Clay-Flores and Trish DeBerry. [Details](#).

Gina E. Gallegos will replace retiring Mario Jorge next year as District Engineer for the 12-county TxDOT **San Antonio** District. She formerly had held the position of Director of the Construction Division at TxDOT's **Austin** headquarters since 2017. [Details](#).

Special Note: The **Monday Morning Report** will take a break for the next few weeks but wanted to end this issue with thanks to our Corridor Council members and subscribers. '**Merry Christmas** to all and to all a good night!'

## Thought of the Week

*"Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love."*

— Hamilton Wright Mabie

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