



Monday Morning Report

January 9, 2023

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council is scheduled to meet Wednesday, January 18, 2023 by Zoom. To add an item to the agenda, email council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Infection and mortality rates have dropped sufficiently that the **Monday Morning Report** will no longer update weekly COVID statistics, but we end that coverage with this note: 10,608 people have died thus far from the disease in the six **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** counties that we cover, based upon state data ([here](#)); and while we may be done with the coronavirus, warns the **Washington Post**, but it's not done with us. [Opinion](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

TxDOT released the agency's preferred design alternative last week for the IH-35 Capital Express Central Project through eight miles of downtown **Austin**, deemed Modified-Build Alternative 3. The \$4.5 billion rebuild would develop 42-acres of land and displace just over one hundred homes and businesses. Public comments on the project remain open until March 7. [Story](#). [More details](#). [Comment](#).

Loop 410 surpassed Interstate 35 as the deadliest highway in **San Antonio**, with 121 fatal wrecks since 2017. The **Express-News** reports that Interstate 10, Loop 1604, and US Highway 90 round out the top five most lethal roadways in the city, with US 281 and Interstate 37 close behind in total fatal accidents through 2022. [Story](#).

With the 88th session of the Legislature convening this week, two scholars from the LBJ School of Public Affairs are reminding lawmakers that Texas is no longer a rural state. More people live in **Houston** alone than in the rural areas - which now account for only about 10% of state population. Housing affordability and transportation gridlock must be addressed, they argue, and transportation means more than just highways. [Opinion](#).

San Francisco-based Cruise, which is owned by General Motors, is now offering a fully autonomous rideshare service in central **Austin** with no human driver or safety monitor. The vehicles are operating Wednesday thru Sunday, from 10 pm to 5:30 am, and are available by joining a wait list ([here](#)) for advance booking. [Story](#). There are some reports of Cruise autonomous vehicles in **San Francisco** causing traffic problems. [More](#).

The truck driver shortages that plagued US supply chains during the pandemic, when high freight rates caused many truckers to strike out on their own as independent operators, has eased, **The Loadstar** reports. Slowing volume in the second half of last year combined with higher fuel costs caused drivers to return to traditional logistics suppliers and haulage firms. The current driver shortage stands at about 78,000, they report. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

The Biden administration is pumping \$370 billion into clean energy production but resistance is growing to large-scale wind farms across the US, the **New York Times** reports, highlighting one project that requires 34,000-acres of land - 6000 such projects would be required to meet the administration's climate goals.

Story. A local **Austin** energy writer has compiled the only US database of rejected wind and solar projects (available [here](#)).

Austin and **San Antonio** newspapers last week produced similar outlooks in their annual forecasting of real estate trends for 2023, with high interest rates and high residential prices leading to cooling markets; but population growth and economic fundamentals - continued jobs growth - will avoid the more dramatic downturns seen elsewhere in the US. Forecasts: **Austin. San Antonio.**

Surging demand for electric vehicles is leading to price increases for the scarce ingredients that are used in making batteries, the **New York Times** reports, and that in turn is driving corporate and investor interest in the recycling of old batteries. Billions of dollars are pouring into recycling ventures, with shortages expected to continue well into the 2030's, the paper says. **Story.**

New Braunfels is mourning the loss of Orion Knox, Jr., discoverer of the Natural Bridge Caverns, who died on New Year's Eve at the age of 81. In 1960, Knox found the 'Discovery Crawlway,' which ultimately led to three-and-a-half miles of underground caves and caverns - some as large as a football field - that became a regional tourist attraction visited by millions. **Story.**

Thought of the Week

"Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely."

- Karen Kaiser Clark

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