



Monday Morning Report

February 21, 2022

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council met via Zoom on Wednesday of last week (02/16/22) for a presentation by Susan Fraser of TxDOT on the latest conceptual designs for the Central Texas Expressway through downtown **Austin**. There were also updates on various projects underway and discussions of new Federal Highway Administration policies, TxDOT's revised policy on Broadway in **San Antonio**, VIA's Advanced Rapid Transit north/south project, interurban bus service between **Austin & San Antonio**, SH 130 and other post-pandemic traffic data, and an upcoming IH-10 study. For more details, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global cases this morning have reached 424.7 million, with 5.88 million deaths. US cases are at 78.5 million with 935,336 deaths. (2/21/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Texas was reporting 5,407,689 confirmed cases with 82,416 deaths yesterday, including in **Bexar County**: 459,623 cases with 5,812 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 25,904 cases, with 378 deaths; **Comal County**: 21,473 cases, with 521 deaths; **Hays County**: 51,266 cases with 409 deaths; **Travis County**: 200,276 cases with 1,654 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 107,030 cases with 833 deaths (2/20/22). ([TDHHS](#)). For current regional hospitalization-rate data, go [here](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

The clearest winner in recent infrastructure spending measures (about \$350 billion over five years) in **Washington** was the asphalt industry, representing the material that paves 94% of US roads and bridges, the **New York Times** reports. That victory hinged significantly on efforts that positioned asphalt as an ally in combating climate change: 'We're America's No. 1 most recycled product,' claimed an industry official. [Story](#).

An escalating dispute in **Washington** among the Biden administration, Congressional Democrats, and the US Postal Service over modernizing the Postal Service's delivery fleet illustrates just why the transition to electric vehicles will be so difficult. The outcome may lock the USPS into gas-powered vehicles until 2050. [Story](#).

Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia inched closer to developing a high-speed rail link with a \$150 million prospective budget item approved as part of an overall \$16 billion transportation measure approved by Washington state Democrats ([details](#)). In other high speed rail news, the latest cost estimates for California's troubled and truncated **Los Angeles to San Francisco** project jumped by \$5 billion to \$105 billion. [Story](#).

The **Austin** Chamber of Commerce hosted an infrastructure panel last week with local manufacturers, business leaders, and transportation providers discussing IH-35, Project Connect, Bergstrom Airport, and the energy grid, all focused on the question, as a speaker put it, of 'How are we ensuring that they're working together?' [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

University of Texas at **Austin** and Sony researchers believe that linking artificial intelligence and video games such as Gran Turismo Sport can translate into creating better autonomous vehicle technology in the future. **Story**.

After announcing proposals for big projects in **Chicago, New York, Washington, and Los Angeles**, Elon Musk's The Boring Company appears to be scaling back its ambitions and limiting its efforts to tunnel projects in less-regulated Texas and Nevada - at least in the near term - reports **Bloomberg News**, citing recent filings. **Story**.

General Motors subsidiary Cruise began offering robotaxi rides on a limited basis last week in parts of **San Francisco**, but only after dark between the hours of 11 pm-5 am - largely shielding the service from competing with the most difficult challenges of autonomous technology, according to experts. **Story**.

Demographics guru Richard Florida writes that despite the continued dominance of big urban talent markets on the East and West Coasts, smaller, more affordable cities in the US heartland have made considerable progress over the last few years in attracting highly educated, highly mobile younger workers. **Austin** is cited. **Opinion**.

Thought of the Week

"Prediction is very difficult, especially if it's about the future."

- Niels Bohr

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