



Monday Morning Report

March 20, 2023

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled to meet Wednesday, April 19th at 2pm by Zoom. Our guest speaker will be Greg Stunz, Ph.D. of the Harte Research Institute. To add an item to the agenda, contact council@thecorridor.org.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Amtrak has released a preliminary look at its Long Distance Routes Study as part of its first Working Group meeting. The slide deck covers history of the program, existing corridors, the study process/timeline, and additional routes to be examined. **Austin** and **San Antonio** are referenced. [Amtrak Study Review](#).

TxDOT's plan for rebuilding IH-35 through downtown **Austin** continues to draw fire, particularly now from local businesses (106 in all, according to this report) that would be forced to move or close under the latest designs. Despite a shrunken footprint, revisions that cut business closure by half, an removing a 70-apartment housing complex from the plan, local opponents continue to question the effort and its effect on congestion. [Story](#). **NEW FUNDING**.

TxDOT is launching its latest long-range plan public process, *Connecting Texas 2050*, to establish the vision, objectives, performance measures and strategy recommendations for the state's transportation system. Virtual public meetings begin March 21 and run through May 31, 2023. You can follow the process and participate [here](#).

GPS navigation company **TomTom** has some suggestions for **San Antonio** drivers hoping to avoid congestion: stay off the road from 5-6 pm, especially on Thursdays. The company released its 2022 congestion traffic index for global cities last month ([here](#)), and this year's report has a handy interactive graphic to help calculate how much your commute costs. [Here](#) is **Austin** data. [Story](#).

More details are emerging on state legislative efforts to derail **Austin's** Project Connect transit program by requiring new voter approvals for various parts of the plan that require borrowing money, including no-surprise support from former **Travis County** commissioner Gerald Daugherty - longtime Capital Metro critic. [Story](#).

Self-driving car devotees were in abundant supply for several South By Southwest panels in **Austin** last week, including General Motors CEO Mary Barra, who said the technology is 'key' for her company's future. [Story](#). Meanwhile, the **Washington Post** reports on a dark side of Elon Musk's obsession with autonomous tech. [Story](#).

Local governments are in alignment supporting a second causeway between **Corpus Christi, Padre Island**, and **Port Aransas**, which could conceivably be the next big South Texas highway infrastructure project after completion of the delayed Harbor Bridge project of the Corpus Christi ship channel. [Details](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

A **Washington**-based **New York Times** columnist says that following reversals caused by the COVID pandemic, "The era of urban supremacy is over." Empty office buildings, ridership-ravaged transit systems, decimated tax-revenue streams, and out-migration of younger, high-skilled, mobile workers is creating 'an urban doom loop,' for big cities in the North. Already-growing Southern cities, like **Austin**, benefit, writes Thomas B. Edsall. [Opinion](#).

San Antonio's main economic development organization, Greater: SATX, is joining Opportunity **Austin** to pursue several legislative initiatives, including business retention measures, development-related tax incentives for manufacturers and support for the Texas Enterprise Fund – state-supported "deal-closing" investments. [Story](#). [More](#).

Interesting Idea: an **Austin**-based 3D home printing company is putting up a \$1 million prize to designers and students who can crack the housing affordability issue by proposing architectural solutions - an 'affordability moonshot' - that could bring the price of a new home to under \$99,000. [Story](#). [Competition](#).

You may have heard **Austin** described as "a million hippies high on antihistamines," but the **Washington Post** says the city is no worse than a middling of US metro regions for pesky allergies. **Dallas, Wichita, Oklahoma City**, and the whole state of Florida are far worse, apparently. Color us as congested and surprised. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"If you want to make enemies, try to change something."

– Woodrow Wilson

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