



Monday Morning Report

March 27, 2023

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee will meet Wednesday, April 19th at 2 pm 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.

Join us at the **Texas Electric Transportation Resources Alliance** (TxETRA) Group Policy meeting on Friday, April 7th at 1:30 pm via Zoom ([here](#)).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Project Connect offered **Austin** a first look at five new, scaled-back and scaled-down scenarios for light rail and bus rapid transit development last week. The plans feature shorter, mainly north/south routes running largely at-grade. The long subterranean tunnel proposed earlier has apparently been scrapped. [Story](#). And the **Austin American-Statesman** weighs in on Legislative attempts to restrict Project Connect's spending. [Opinion](#).

Keep an eye on Amtrak's most recent hire: Andy Byford, one of the most respected transit administrators in the world, has taken charge of Amtrak's drive toward advanced high-speed rail in the US. After stints running transit systems in **London, Sydney, and New York**, Byford now turns his attention to the Northeast Corridor. [Story](#).

Governor Greg Abbott has nominated **Mission** banker Alex G. Meade and **Houston** real estate developer Steve Alvis to the Texas Transportation Commission. The Texas Senate must confirm the appointments. [Release](#).

1.3 million annual deaths and 50 million injuries are the worldwide toll of traffic accidents, reports the United Nations special envoy for road safety, speaking in **Washington** last week. Nine of every ten traffic deaths occur in low-to-middle income countries, and one in four fatalities is a pedestrian or a cyclist, he says. [Story](#).

Researchers mapped over 15,000 global areas deemed key to species biodiversity and concluded that at least one type of modern infrastructure (roads, power lines, urban development) is encroaching on 80% of the areas - alarming for the long-term prospects of human survival - the **Washington Post** reports. [Story. Report](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

A **Monday Morning Report** item last week had an urban issues columnist predicting a post-COVID 'urban doom loop' for major US cities and suggesting that 'the era of urban supremacy is over ([here](#)).' A former Executive Committee guest speaker from the Brookings Institute, Tracy Hadden Loh, responds by posing

and answering the question, "How can downtowns adapt to become less reliant on commuters and office space?" [Essay](#).

Loss Leader: **Detroit**-based Ford Motor Company expects a \$3 billion 2023 loss on its electric vehicle production, following a just-over \$2 billion loss for 2022. Undeterred, the company will spend \$50 billion on EV's through 2026. [Story](#). Meanwhile, the transition to EV's is taking a toll on legacy Mid-West manufacturing towns. [More](#).

The **San Antonio Express-News** surveyed **Austin**-area home sales last week, concluding that the market is cooling but still robust. Median home prices have dipped in the urban core, they report, but surrounding area-median prices stayed flat. Listings are way up, likely due to a rush of new home-building in the suburbs. [Story](#).

Austin and **San Antonio** may argue about who has the best breakfast tacos, but they were both in complete agreement last week opposing a 'catastrophic' bill by **Georgetown** senator Charles Schwertner that would outlaw transfer payments from municipally owned utilities to supplement local city budgets. [Story](#).

Newly elected **Bexar County** judge Peter Sakai is wasting no time in taking charge of the county's operations and budget processes. He's launched a 'broad organizational review' of virtually every aspect of the county government, including outdated technology and proposed weekly workshop meetings of the court. [Story](#).

New Braunfels hosted the *57th Annual Legislative Conference* last week, addressing economic development, education, and border security - among other issues. **Val Verde County** judge Lewis Owens urged more state and federal help for overwhelmed local immigration courts: "It should not be our damned problem." [Story](#).

Tesla, Twitter, and The Boring Company's CEO Elon Musk's plans to develop a company town (Musksville?) reminiscent of 19th century industrial America in **Bastrop County** near **Austin** are drawing national media attention, not all of it favorable. [Story](#). [Opinion](#).

United Airlines will begin using electric-powered vertical takeoff and landing vehicles (VTOLs) to move passengers from downtown **Chicago** to O'Hare International Airport by 2025. The air taxis are being proposed as a solution to local traffic congestion and are estimated to cut travel trip times by 30 minutes. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"We confess to little faults only to persuade ourselves we have no great ones."

– La Rochefoucauld

This newsletter is available to our members. If you wish to unsubscribe, please send an email request to council@thecorridor.org.