



Monday Morning Report

April 4, 2022

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee will meet on April 20 at 2 PM by videoconference. To add an item to the agenda, contact council@thecorridor.org.

Reminder: The **Axios** news service hosts their inaugural, virtual 'What's Next' Summit tomorrow (4/5) but you'll need to register online beforehand to participate. The series will address five key themes: *Next Cities, Work Shifts, Electric Everything, Financial Flux, and Trending Tech*. **Speakers & Registration**.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global confirmed cases this morning reached 491.5 million, with 6,153,454 fatalities. US cases are at 80.1 million with 982,566 deaths. (4/4/22) (**Johns Hopkins**). Yesterday, Texas reported 5,508,960 confirmed cases with 86,074 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 469,501 cases with 6,091 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 26,222 cases, with 398 deaths; **Comal County**: 21,992 cases, with 545 deaths; **Hays County**: 51,959 cases with 430 deaths; **Travis County**: 203,158 cases with 1,716 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 108,641 cases with 869 deaths (4/3/22). (**TDHHS**). *Current regional hospitalization-rate data is found [here](#)*.

INFRASTRUCTURE

As part of their plan to boost domestic electric vehicle production and deployment, the Biden administration announced plans in **Washington** last week to use the Cold War-era Defense Production Act in securing supplies of various key minerals (lithium, nickel, cobalt, graphite, etc.) used in electric cars. The move could have big implications for trade & freight routes, supply chains, and **Austin-San Antonio**-area auto-manufacturing. **Story**.

Add another \$750 million to the price tag for that massive I-45 rebuild in **Houston**, which officials now estimate will now cost \$9 billion due to changes requested by local jurisdictions, project delays, and increasing construction costs. The troubled project is still mired in disputes among local officials, TxDOT, and federal authorities. **Story**.

Two **Boston** academics researching autonomous vehicles argue in the pop-culture publication **Daily Beast** that fully self-driving technology is decades away and may even be ultimately impossible. "Current self-driving cars fall short, and will always fall short, because they rely upon a statistical model of the world instead of naturally embracing unexpected real-time events." Artificial intelligence won't help, they say. **Opinion**.

Environmental groups are sounding the alarm about water and waste-water usage in the Texas **Hill Country**, saying that current and expected population growth around towns like **Boerne, Uvalde, Kerrville, and Mason** is 'unsustainable,' reports the **Express-News**. It's not just more people, but people using more water. **Story**.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

For the fifth consecutive year, **Comal County** property values will increase by double digits, and this year's increases are projected to be the highest ever, the **Herald-Zeitung** reports. The Comal Appraisal District believes values will be up by 30-50%. *Market* values in **New Braunfels** are up by 38.1%, to \$14.594 billion. [Story](#).

Applied Materials, the **Santa Clara**, California-based technology company, is considering a site near **Austin** in **Hutto** for a \$2.4 billion research & development facility that could employ hundreds in the booming Central Texas tech sector. [Details](#).

The American West is at risk of twin dangers arising from global warming: drought and wildfires followed by intense, heavy rainfall leading to mudslides and flash floods, according to a new study reported [here](#) by the **New York Times**. But there's good news, too: a backlash against 'doomers' on climate change is developing ([here](#)); and solar & wind power are meeting goals. [Details](#).

"Longevity is underrated," concludes the **San Antonio Report** founder Robert Rivard in a tribute to **Bexar County** judge Nelson Wolff and his wife Tracy - saluting nearly 50 years of public and philanthropic service by the 'over-achieving couple,' as Wolff prepares to retire at the end of the year. [Opinion](#).

Dr. Kelly Dampouse - currently chancellor/CEO of Arkansas State University - will succeed the retiring Denise Trauth as president of Texas State University in **San Marcos**, if approved by the system's regents. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"Surplus wealth is a sacred trust which its possessor is bound to administer in his lifetime for the good of the community."

- Andrew Carnegie

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