



Monday Morning Report

April 22, 2024

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council met last week (4/17) for a presentation by **Bexar County** commissioner Tommy Calvert regarding a new proposed park project in **San Antonio**. Also on the agenda: developments in Texas high speed rail; \$10 billion in available federal funding for rail projects; a roll-out timetable for autonomous trucking in Texas; and joint agency purchasing options for electric vehicles. [Agenda](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Amtrak is stepping into the driver's seat for that **Dallas-to-Houston** high speed rail project, raising the Texas Central Railway from near-death to suddenly, *maybe*, possible. Andy Byford, head of Amtrak high speed rail development, told reporters in **Dallas** last week that his agency had a non-binding agreement with Texas Central to manage the effort going forward. "We're dating or courting, not married," said another Amtrak official. [Story](#).

US commuter rail agencies are moving toward a more regional service approach, 'bi-directional all-day service to serve the post-pandemic hybrid workforce and provide additional or more attractive travel options to discretionary customers,' five industry leaders told a House Transportation sub-committee last week. [Story](#).

Members of a community task force advising **Austin Water**, the city's primary water utility, are voicing concerns that conservation plans headed for city council approval are too timid to address the current and future impacts of climate change. Including industrial uses, Austinites average 127 gallons of use per person daily. The new goals aim to reduce that by 4 gallons per day to 123 gallons per day by 2029. [Story](#).

Major US ports are on a roll, with container flows at the nation's ten largest gateways up nearly 20% year-over-year through March. These ten ports handle 86% of US import traffic and **Los Angeles** came in first, followed by **New York-New Jersey**, and **Long Beach** at third. The pandemic impacts are over, one analyst says. [Story](#).

Economist Niall Ferguson posits in **Bloomberg**: 'any great power that spends more on debt service than on defense will not stay great for very long.' The US will test that notion this year, with debt service totaling 3.1% of GDP and defense spending 3.0%. By 2041, interest payments will be twice defense spending, he says. [Opinion](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Austin and **Houston** were the only Texas cities to make the 'Top Twenty List of Most Walkable Cities in the US', at least as judged by the **Smart Growth America** initiative, as reported by **Conde Nast Traveler** magazine. The criteria used to judge candidates was distance from homes to amenities and built environment (density). [Story](#).

Austin, Dallas, and **Houston** ranked in the Top Ten US cities for millionaires, according to a new study reported by the **American-Statesman**. With 32,700, Austin ranked 10th in the US for most millionaire residents. [Data](#). [Story](#).

Automobile insurance premiums are skyrocketing due to increased car prices and higher repair costs - and it's worse in Texas than any other state, the **Express News** reports. Rates in Texas jumped by an average of 25.5% in 2023, more than double the average increase nationally. Accident rates are also way up, they report. [Story](#).

Today being Earth Day (4/22) highlights a new pilot program in **Detroit** worth noting: today the city launches a remote-controlled robot the size of a lawn mower that sifts through sand to filter out cigarette butts, bottles, wrappers, and small pieces of plastic to prevent trash from making its way into creeks and rivers. [Details](#).

Travis County judge Andy Brown delivers his 'State of the County' address *this* Wednesday, April 24, 6:30-8:30 pm at the Travis County Commissioners Court building in **Austin** at 700 Lavaca. Details & RSVP [here](#).

Early voting starts today for the upcoming May 4 election, and the San Antonio Report says the top races to watch in **Bexar County** are the Bexar Appraisal District, the Northeast Independent School District and Alamo Community College District boards, and a hot **Balcones Heights** mayoralty contest. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream."

- C.S. Lewis

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