



Monday Morning Report

May 16, 2022

INTERNAL

Anyone with a potential interest in electric vehicles for personal or governmental use should join *this* Wednesday's Zoom meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council's Executive Committee, May 18 at 2:00 pm. Our guest speaker will be Ali Jahed, Electric Vehicles National Consultant Manager for General Motors Fleet Sales. [Zoom Meeting Invitation](#). For Zoom ID and Passcode, email council@thecorridor.org. Speaker's Bio [here](#). [Draft Meeting Agenda](#).

COVID-19 UPDATE: Worldwide confirmed cases are now at 521.5 million, with 6,264,120 deaths. US cases reached 82,468,652 this morning and reported deaths will hit one million later today. (5/16/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). As of yesterday, Texas was reporting 5,579,245 confirmed cases with 86,713 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 476,099 cases with 6,132 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 26,464 cases, still with 398 deaths; **Comal County**: 22,268 cases, with 550 deaths; **Hays County**: 52,749 cases with 432 deaths; **Travis County**: 207,913 cases with 1,735 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 110,801 cases with 879 deaths (5/15/22). ([TDHHS](#)). *Current regional hospitalization-rate data is found [here](#).*

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Federal Railroad Administration issued their initial guidance on the Establishment of the Corridor Identification and Development Program for Amtrak last Friday (5/13) in **Washington** via the *Federal Register*. The notice included a Request for Expressions of Interest, by which communities interested in participating in the state-supported intercity passenger rail program run by Amtrak may engage in the selection process. [Notice](#).

A testament to policy consistency and bipartisan political cohesion, the \$22 billion high-tech Elizabeth rail line across central **London** opens next week (5/24) after 13 years of construction and decades of planning. Early reviews are raves: the stations are 'cathedral-like;' the trains 'roomy,' arriving with scarcely a whisper.' [Story](#).

In Mexico, a controversial new \$10 billion, 950-mile-long passenger rail line between **Tulum** and **Playa del Carmen** - a pet project of President Andres Lopez Obrador - is drawing increasing fire over environmental issues that involve transecting jaguar jungle habitat and the world's largest underwater cave system. [Story](#).

Closer to home, Amtrak announced that it will expand the Heartland Flyer daily passenger service between **Ft. Worth** and **Oklahoma City** - including a stop in **Norman** - as part of its effort to connect an additional 165 US communities with rail service by 2035. [Story](#).

If you missed that big *Intelligent Infrastructure Conference* in **Austin** late last month (4/28-29), there are now video and power-point presentations from the event available online. Sign up for a free Topio Network account [here](#), then select the box for Intelligent Infrastructure and you can select which panels to watch. [Agenda](#).

Big Shakeup at Capital Metro: After leading the ambitious multi-billion-dollar Project Connect light rail effort to success in a tough local tax-rate election, **Austin** Capital Metro's president Randy Clarke is leaving to lead the **Washington DC**-area metropolitan transit agency. No word yet on a replacement. [Story](#).

The US Commerce Secretary invited the states last week to begin applying for \$45 billion that will be made available over the next five years for 'universal broadband' access throughout the country. Secretary Gina Raimondo compared the effort to rural electrification programs that revolutionized farm life in the 1930's. Each state is guaranteed at least \$100 million from the first tranche of funding. [Details](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Enrollment opens *today* for **San Antonio**'s \$200 million-plus Ready-to-Work jobs training program, designed to create 'a pipeline of talent for industries such as healthcare, cyber security, and manufacturing.' Funded through a voter-approved 1/8-cent sales tax, the program already has 800 people pre-registered. [Story](#). [More](#).

Travis County has more electric or hybrid-powered vehicles than any other county in Texas, with about 18,000 vehicles, according to an industry advocacy group study using statewide data analyses. **Bexar County** ranked fifth of the larger metro areas, with around 10,000 vehicles. [Story](#). [Data](#).

Electric vehicles are cheaper month-to-month than gas-powered cars - beginning from the date of purchase, says a new report from **Energy Innovation**. Most consumers only consider the upfront purchase cost without factoring in maintenance, incentives, financing, fees, and fuel costs, the study says. [Story](#).

Memo: 'Earth to **National Geographic**' - The British version of **National Geographic**, in a profile of **San Antonio**'s various culinary and cultural attractions intended to go beyond the usual tourist destinations, described the home of the US national cyber security center as 'a surprisingly modern city.' Bloody cheeky. [Story](#).

In a declaration reminiscent of the so-called (and non-existent) 'taco wars' between **Austin** and **San Antonio**, the **Express-News** last week called little **Johnson City** the 'newer, cooler' version of nearby big-brother **Fredericksburg**, with a 'more chill, cooler vibe.' We're staying out of this one. [Opinion](#).

Thought of the Week

"The winner will be the one who knows how to pick the right fights

- Jane Ciabattari

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