



## Monday Morning Report

July 11, 2022

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### INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee will meet Wednesday, July 20 at 2 PM by videoconference. Our guest speaker will be Mr. D.J. Stadtler, executive director of the Virginia Public Rail Authority, which recently negotiated a \$3.8 billion transaction with CSX Railroad to acquire trackage rights on 350-miles of right of way with the goal of launching hourly Amtrak service from **Richmond to Washington DC**.

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global cases this morning are at 555.5 million (up nearly 5 million from last week) with 6,351,433 million deaths. US cases are at 88,593,875, with 1,020,861 deaths (7/11/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Yesterday, Texas reported 5,892,036 confirmed cases with 87,273 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 505,376 cases with 6,185 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 27,697 cases, still with 401 deaths; **Comal County**: 23,601 cases, with 559 deaths; **Hays County**: 56,355 cases, with 436 deaths; **Travis County**: 225,339 cases, with 1,749 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 118,614 cases with 884 deaths (7/10/22). ([TDHHS](#)). Current regional hospitalization-rate data is found [here](#).

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

Applications must be submitted by Oct. 4 for the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program managed by the Federal Railroad Administration in **Washington**. A Notice of Funding Opportunity was published last week indicating that \$573 million will be made available for this cycle of funding, with \$18 million available for planning purposes. Minority, low-income, and environmentally disadvantaged communities are given priority status. [Notice](#).

Issues that could become key to developing enhanced Amtrak service in the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** were outlined in the **Washington Post** last week, disputes over access to freight railroad tracks on behalf of passenger trains - given new prominence as Amtrak begins rolling out its \$75 billion US expansion plan. The article describes a situation on the **Gulf Coast**, but similar considerations may impact city-pairs nation-wide. [Story](#).

US rail workers have been without a contract since July 2019, and a cooling off period over contract issues mandated by various arbitration panels ends next week (7/19). Union officials in **Ft. Worth** say they may strike absent intervention from President Joe Biden. One more alarm bell for the supply chain. [Story](#).

With most of their major cities already connected by passenger rail, European leaders outlined a plan late last month in **Lyon** to double high speed rail use by 2030, and triple current ridership by 2050. Replacing short-haul airplane flights with high speed trains is one part of an ambitious European Green Deal for transportation and finance contained in their '*Smart and Sustainable Mobility Strategy*' report now under review. [Story](#). [Report](#).

TxDOT's Unified Transportation Plan is out for public discussion with approval pending in late August by the Texas Transportation Commission. The agency projects spending about \$85 billion over the next ten

years, with major Interstate expansions - each with unprecedented opposition - planned for **Dallas, Houston, Austin, and San Antonio**. For more, go [here](#).

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

**National Public Radio** pointed out last week that a US preoccupation with defense issues has allowed China to make broad inroads into a region where America was once dominant, Southeast Asia. Twenty years ago, US trade with the region was three-and-a-half times greater than China's; today, Chinese trade with the region is double that of American trade. [Story](#).

Despite opposition from environmental protesters, the **San Marcos** city council is going forward with tax incentives for a proposed film and television studio project planned for construction in the recharge zone of the Edwards Aquifer. The protests had caused some council members to reconsider an earlier decision. [Story](#).

Securing more nonstop and international flights into **San Antonio** International Airport has long been a goal of the local business community, and now the former **San Antonio** Economic Development Foundation has created a special purpose fund to pursue that ambition. Greater: SATX has raised \$3 million from the private sector for the effort. [Story](#).

The North Texas Commission, representing the **Dallas-Ft. Worth** area, is hosting a major Infrastructure Summit at the Hurst Convention Center July 28 to discuss how the region can benefit from the estimated \$35 billion in federal funding coming to Texas from the Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act. Details and register [here](#).

With temperatures set to soar this week, most of the state is under a heat advisory that has the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) warning consumers to turn down the air conditioner and turn off major appliances, at least between 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm today. The warnings are making national news, [here](#).

It looks like **Boca Chica** won't be becoming a **Starbase** after all. Local residents seem to have resigned themselves to the notion that Elon Musk's high-flying ambitions to launch a mission to Mars from the small town near **Brownsville** have altered permanently after a series of delays for environmental approvals. SpaceX, Musk's company, is shifting launch operations to Florida, local economic development officials said. [Story](#).

## Thought of the Week

*"One could wait a lifetime and find nothing at the end of the waiting. I would begin here; I would make something happen."*

- Louis L'Amour

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