



Monday Morning Report

July 25, 2022

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee met last week (7/20) for updates on the \$85-billion TxDOT 2023 Unified Transportation Plan, the I-10 Study thru **San Antonio** currently underway, construction schedule developments on IH-35 in **Austin**, the Federal Railroad Administration's latest funding opportunities for the Railroad Crossing Elimination program, and a presentation and lengthy discussion of the Virginia Public Rail Authority's project to develop Amtrak service between **Richmond**, VA and **Washington** DC [for more on Amtrak, see below].

COVID-19 UPDATE: Global cases yesterday reached 570 million (up 8 million from last week), with 6,383,840 million deaths. US cases are at 90,411,020, with 1,026,953 deaths (7/24/22) (**Johns Hopkins**). Texas reported 6,004,750 cases this weekend, with 87,544 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 515,111 cases with 6,210 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 28,109 cases, with 403 deaths; **Comal County**: 24,073 cases, with 561 deaths; **Hays County**: 57,768 cases, with 440 deaths; **Travis County**: 230,783 cases, with 1,754 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 121,182 cases with 888 deaths (7/23//22). (**TDHHS**). *Regional hospitalization-rate data found [here](#).*

INFRASTRUCTURE

Special Amtrak Report:

- A new Intercity Corridor Identification and Development Program from the Federal Railroad Administration provides up to \$25 billion to expand Amtrak services between US cities, offering Texas a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create additional capacity and mode-diversity in the state transportation network - largely at federal government expense.
- The program allows the federal government to pay 80% of both underlying infrastructure investment *and* operating costs for the first six years of 'enhanced' passenger service. Texas House Transportation Chair Terry Canales has already proposed three potential sources for any state match required.
- Removing cars from the highways between connected cities will benefit both freight and passenger movements, reduce future state maintenance costs, and generate significant economic development potential for businesses, universities, airports, and citizens along selected routes.
- Based upon other systems elsewhere, sufficiently enhanced Amtrak service *could* mean congestion-proof passenger trains operating hourly during peak rush-hour traffic periods between city centers and - with sufficient infrastructure investment - at speeds competitive with comparable automobile trips.
- The Austin-San Antonio Corridor could use the program to help resolve congestion and safety issues along Interstate 35 created by soaring population and freight traffic increases, providing an important alternative (mitigation) mode for motorists during the next ten years of IH-35 reconstruction.

- Enhanced service could partially replace Lone Star Rail, which early studies projected would increase gross state product by \$2.5 billion, regional personal incomes by \$1.75 billion, taxable station-area sales by \$10.7 billion, property values by \$2 billion, state sales tax revenue by \$750 million, and local government & school district tax revenue by \$747 million by 2030.
- Unlike the Lone Star Rail project, Amtrak has statutory access to Union Pacific Railroad tracks between Austin-San Antonio if it is willing to finance any infrastructure investments required to increase capacity to the desired level of passenger service.
- The program requires that Texas (TxDOT) file an Expression of Interest to identify city pairs the state would like to have considered for development. Demand for the program's funding is expected to be high, so coordinated local government action is time-sensitive.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Months after announcing a new \$17 billion plant in **Taylor**, high tech giant Samsung now says it is considering nearly \$200 billion in investments in 11 additional **Austin**-area facilities. The news sparked economic development headlines worldwide. **Story**. Experts said move would put Austin in the top tier of global tech hubs and bring in 10,000 jobs. **More**. Investment details **here**. Possible Korea incentives play? **Here**.

Thought of the Week

"If you can't do great things, do small things in a great way."

- Napoleon Hill

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