



Monday Morning Report

August 8, 2022

INTERNAL

The next meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee is scheduled for Wednesday, August 17 at 2 PM by videoconference. To add an item to the agenda, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: As of this morning global cases have reached 584,652,751, with 6,418,232 deaths. US cases are at 92,113,114 with 1,033,557 deaths (8/8/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Texas reported 6,111,556 cases as of Friday, with 87,873 deaths, including in **Bexar County:** 523,979 cases with 6,237 deaths; **Guadalupe County:** 28,520 cases, with 406 deaths; **Comal County:** 24,479 cases, with 563 deaths; **Hays County:** 58,863 cases, with 447 deaths; **Travis County:** 235,481 cases, with 1,762 deaths; and **Williamson County:** 123,433 cases with 892 deaths (8/5/22). ([TDHHS](#)). *Regional hospitalization-rate data found [here](#).*

INFRASTRUCTURE

Transportation infrastructure spending can make mobility and connectivity more efficient and resilient, but other types of investments critical to community vitality and equity are also required to leverage infrastructure spending to help local residents and enterprises raise their incomes and build assets. A thoughtful piece from Bruce Katz at Drexel University in **Philadelphia** asks, *'What Follows Infrastructure Spending?'* [Opinion](#).

TxDOT has rejected the latest voter-approved plan for renovating **San Antonio's** Broadway Street corridor by reducing traffic lanes from six to four, despite city efforts to improve traffic flow with various efficiency measures. City officials now hint that, without a compromise, they may move funds from the corridor to other projects. [Story](#).

Seattle-based journal **Grist** claims a seven-year review of 130 TxDOT projects shows the agency systematically violates federal law by splitting environmental reviews into separate segments to arrive at a 'No Significant Impact' decision, despite spending \$24 billion to add 3,000 new lane-miles to highways, consume 12,000 acres of land, and displacing 477 homes and 376 businesses. **Houston** and **Austin** projects are referenced. [Story](#).

"The infrastructure we have is really built for a climate we are not living in anymore," says an expert on extreme weather in another **Washington Post** story analyzing how two 1-in-1000-year rainfall events hit **St. Louis** and Kentucky two weeks ago. The US has been struggling with antiquated sewage & wastewater networks, outdated bridges, and crumbling roads, but climate change makes those challenges more urgent, the piece notes. [Story](#).

More details emerged last week about safety concerns with that massive (\$900- million-plus) new Harbor Bridge project in **Corpus Christi**: In a letter to the contractors, TxDOT identified five specific hazards that

could cause the structure to collapse under certain load conditions, calling the final design 'highly problematic.' Ouch. [Story](#).

Despite lackluster financial performance and pandemic-driven ridership losses, nine top Amtrak execs received bonuses of over \$200,000 in fiscal 2021, reports the **New York Times**. Two top officials earned over \$700,000 in short-term incentive bonuses since 2016. A labor union official said he was "disgusted" by the payouts. [Story](#).

The **Houston Chronicle** editorial board is supporting the local Metropolitan Transit Agency's University Line, a 25-mile, \$1.5 billion, 40-station Bus Rapid Transit proposal the newspaper says will connect several of the city's different 'downtowns' - despite the Agency's previous 'mismanaged expectations for attracting riders.' [Opinion](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

A billion-dollar citrus crop in the parched **Rio Grande Valley** is being threatened by this year's heat, but the problem is bigger than just grapefruit: the entire scorched American Southwest is drying up as the Colorado River - a primary water source for 40 million people and seven states - faces what NASA says is possibly the worst drought in 12 centuries. [Story](#). [Opinion](#).

Microsoft founder Bill Gates says the Inflation Reduction Act, passed yesterday in the US Senate, will 'transform American energy innovations into American energy industries and unlock huge economic opportunities in the energy market,' creating millions of jobs and a 'fair transition' from fossil fuels to clean energy. [Opinion](#).

A coalition of 17 states and **Washington DC** have signed onto a plan to electrify 30% of trucks & buses in their jurisdictions by 2030, with a goal of making such vehicles 100% electric by 2050. Texas is not included. [Story](#).

The **New Braunfels** National Airport has received a \$1.5 million federal grant to help move and upgrade its air control tower with a new modern facility, city manager Robert Camareno announced last week. The funding comes from the trillion-dollar Bipartisan Infrastructure and Investment Jobs Act passed last November. [Story](#).

Correction/Update: Despite reports to the contrary in the **Express-News** and **Austonia**, Elon Musk tweeted that he doesn't need a new private airport; instead, he says, **Austin** Bergstrom International Airport just needs another new runway. "Austin is growing fast!" quoth the Maven. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"It's the people who never learn the word impossible who make history, because they're the ones who keep trying."

- Leigh Bardugo

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