



Monday Morning Report

August 22, 2022

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council met last week (8/17) for updates on various projects including the TxDOT I-10 study, recent meetings and presentations of the Texas Electric Transportation Resources Alliance and the TxETRA South Central Compact Committee, new RFQ's from the Federal Railroad Administration, Amtrak service developments for the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor, and **Monterrey-Laredo** rail development. A presentation on I-10/I-35 from Will Smithson of HNTB was postponed until next month. For details, contact council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: This morning, global cases are at 596,260,320 with 6,454,061 deaths. US cases are at 93,648,338 with 1,041,168 deaths (8/22/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Texas was reporting 6,196,865 cases as of Friday, with 88,304 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 530,984 cases with 6,263 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 28,806 cases, still with 406 deaths; **Comal County**: 24,810 cases, also still with 563 deaths; **Hays County**: 59,942 cases, with 449 deaths; **Travis County**: 238,905 cases, with 1,772 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 125,093 cases with 896 deaths (8/19/22). ([TDHHS](#)). *Regional hospitalization-rate data found [here](#).*

INFRASTRUCTURE

Water woes are hammering trade and infrastructure nearly everywhere, it seems: In Europe, the Rhine River closed completely to barge traffic with water levels at historic lows, tangling supply chains ([here](#)); Italy's River Po dried up, threatening risotto rice production ([here](#)); Loire tributaries are a mere trickle, reducing cooling water for French nuclear power plants ([here](#)); low river levels may cost 80 million people in China's Sichuan province hydroelectric power; and, the Rio Grande is at a critical stage for **South Texas** agriculture ([here](#)).

Closer to home, the drought has **Hill Country** residents seeking protections for the Trinity and Edwards Aquifers as ranchers and wildlife suffer ([here](#)), and **Hays County** residents gather next Saturday (8/27) at the Rough House Brew Pub (680 Oakwood Loop, between **Wimberley** and **San Marcos**) to discuss aquifer water levels ([here](#)) that have been dropping five feet per week since June ([here](#)).

Issues surrounding the use of electric scooters in downtown **Austin** - including accidents, injuries, fatalities, and abandoned vehicles - continue to plague city officials and pedestrians. Most recent numbers indicate there are about 11,000 scooters in the central city operated by at least three vendors but, officials say, no central database of accidents. Some activists want **Austin** officials to mirror rules that **San Diego** deployed. [Story](#). [More](#).

The **Express-News** reconsiders two books documenting the role that **San Antonio** roads and highways played in shaping the growth of the city and its neighborhoods, from the regional routes like Fredericksburg and Bandera Roads to the I-10 and I-35 superhighways. *In the Loop: A Political and Economic History of San Antonio*, by David R. Johnson, and *On the Border: An Environmental History of San Antonio*, by Char Miller, reviewed [here](#).

Construction and design problems are continuing to haunt that massive Harbor Bridge project over the ship channel in **Corpus Christi** - and the lack of a meaningful explanation from TxDOT and contractors - are raising questions from residents about just when the nearly-\$1 billion project will be completed.

Opinion.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

An expanded Bergstrom International Airport, a completely re-constructed, below-grade IH-35, at least 49 new downtown apartment and office developments, and a Central Park-style swath of greenspace 'cap and stitch' land bridges over the Interstate, were all on the agenda for the **Austin** Chamber of Commerce Mobility Summit last week (8/17). **Community Impact** has all the details [here](#).

Technology giant Microsoft is planning another expansion on **San Antonio's** west side, this time a \$215 million, 240,000 sq.ft. data center off Highway 151, according to recent state filings. Three other Microsoft data centers are already operating or under development in the same general area. **Details.**

A **San Antonio** city councilwoman is proposing an interesting concept to help older homeowners struggling with rising real estate values and taxes. Teri Castillo (District 5) wants the city to study allowing seniors to do community service work in lieu of paying all or at least part of city property taxes. She points to a similar program in **Boston**, which caps such payments at \$1,500. **Story. More.**

Tesla's 'black box' data collection devices, which track actions taken by on-board Autopilots and drivers, could help federal investigators learn the causes in hundreds of thousands of automobile crashes - IF the company would share the information, the **New York Times** reports. And a recent academic paper concludes that all car manufacturers have the ability/responsibility to collect and report such data. **Story. Report.**

Thought of the Week

"Make visible what, without you, might never have been seen."

- Robert Bresson

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