



## Monday Morning Report

September 18, 2023

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### INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council meets *this* Wednesday, September 20 at 2:00 pm by Zoom. Travis County judge Andy Brown is scheduled to speak. If you would like to add an item to the agenda, email [council@thecorridor.org](mailto:council@thecorridor.org). ***Draft Agenda.***

**IMPORTANT FUNDING OPPORTUNITY:** About \$60 million in funding prioritized for local city and county governments (and companies) in the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** is currently available for exchanging gas-powered vehicles for electric vehicles. The funding can also include the costs of installing re-charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. Details of the program can be found ***here.*** Program manager for the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) is ***Nate.Hickman@tceq.texas.gov.***

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### INFRASTRUCTURE

The move toward building a passenger rail program between **Austin** and **San Antonio** continues to pick up steam, prodded along by the grassroots group **RESTART Lone Star Rail District**. Local news stories have cited renewed interest from **Travis County** officials, the **San Antonio** city council member who chairs the Alamo Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, and even the Union Pacific Railroad itself. ***Story. More.***

Union Pacific Railroad, meanwhile, is being blasted by **Washington** Federal Railroad Administration regulators for poorly maintaining its fleet, laying off train maintenance employees, and pressuring safety inspectors to stop their work in order to keep UP freight trains moving. ***Story. Allegations. Union Pacific Response.***

The **Austin American-Statesman** joins the ongoing effort from the **San Antonio Express-News** by launching a series of stories directed toward our emerging mega-region here in Central Texas, currently home to 5 million people clustered along Interstate 35. This week's installment comes from veteran reporter Michael Barnes. ***Here.***

As rising temperatures hit cities, transportation infrastructure (roads, bridges, and rail) suffers, government-oriented newsletter **Route Fifty** reports. At a US Senate committee hearing last week, **Phoenix** officials detailed the local effects of extreme heat on buckling roads and discussed the impact of 'cool' pavement strategies. Federal resiliency funding is available, but heat may cost local governments up to \$26 billion by 2040. ***Story.***

High-speed Brightline passenger rail service begins next week between **Orlando, Miami, Boca Raton,** and **West Palm Beach**. Train speeds are expected to reach 125-mph and tickets start at \$79. Media reports cite Brightline's lack of profits on its rail services, but this is a real estate play with a long-term payout. ***Story.***

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## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Another big television and film studio project for the **Austin-San Antonio Corridor** was announced last week, this time for a 600-acre site in **Bastrop** scheduled to open in late 2024. A similar project in **San Marcos**, that one with a \$267-million price tag, was announced earlier this year. [Bastrop](#) story. [San Marcos](#) story.

Texas builder/developer Chesmar Homes is planning a massive residential development with 1100 estate-sized (1600-3000 sq.ft.) home lots on **San Antonio's** far West Side. The company said the West Side has been Alamo City's fastest-growing sub-market for 26 years. [Story](#).

**Austin**-based Tesla has developed three versions of a freight-capable electric Semi-truck that are currently being tested by the North American Council for Freight Efficiency, and thus far, the vehicles are proving wrong naysayers who said EV-powered freight trucks weren't feasible. Test results and story are [here](#).

The role of battery storage for the Texas electrical grid has proven an important part of surviving this summer's brutal heat, the **Texas Tribune** reports. Industrial scale battery storage has grown from 275 megawatts in 2020 to 3,500 megawatts today. Expect 10,000 megawatts to be available by the end of next year. [Story](#).

The idea of moving water from the Mississippi River to drier Southwestern states like Texas has been around for a while, but never really materialized because of costs, logistics, and evaporation issues. But now cities and states along the river's route are banding together, **PBS** reports, to ensure the effort never takes shape. [Story](#).

## Thought of the Week

"When the well's dry, we know the worth of water."

- Benjamin Franklin

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