



Monday Morning Report

September 23, 2024

INTERNAL

At last week's meeting of the Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council members heard from San Antonians for Rail Transit about a staged approach to providing passenger rail service between **San Antonio** and **Austin**, including a single-trainset service model they are pursuing. One goal of the group is reducing travel time from three hours twenty-six minutes to one hour twenty-two minutes along the route. The Committee also approved the Council's 2024-25 Workplan and Projects list, among other actions. [Final Agenda](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Political leaders from throughout the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor are participating *today* in a Texas Eagle train trip from **San Antonio** to **Austin**, organized by **Travis County** judge Andy Brown and **Bexar County** judge Peter Sakai, to highlight a request they are making to the Texas Legislature for a \$300 million per year appropriation, which would be used as matching funds for federal dollars flowing to intercity rail projects. [Schedule](#).

The longer freight trains increasingly favored by the US railroad industry create special challenges that can stress equipment and add to the potential for derailments - according to a new report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine - and requires immediate intervention by Congress and the Federal Railroad Administration, reports [Progressive Railroading](#) magazine. [Story](#). [Report](#).

Daily vehicle-miles-traveled have surpassed pre-pandemic levels in the US, increasing 12.3% across the 100 biggest US metro areas, according to a new study reported by [Axios](#). Two Texas cities, **El Paso** and **McAllen**, led the highest increases in daily travel; two California cities, **San Diego** and **San Jose**, had the lowest. [Story](#).

Researchers at the University of Waterloo designed an energy-efficient device that produces drinking water from seawater using evaporation processes driven largely by the sun, [Science Daily](#) reports. The process mimics natural membranes used by trees and does not require the extensive maintenance of current systems. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

Google has launched a new tool to help cities, including **San Antonio**, take steps to lower the impacts of extreme heat. In Alamo City, [Axios](#) reports, 88% of the population lives in areas where the urban 'heat island effect' can raise summer temperatures by at least 8 degrees. The tool can also map social vulnerabilities. [Story](#).

Just as **Austin** Bergstrom International Airport embarks on a \$1-billion-plus series of expansions, American Airlines announced still more cutbacks on local flights, this after the airline axed 21 flights in 2023 and five other routes this past July. Flights to **Boston, Nashville, Raleigh-Durham**, and **Orange County** are affected. [Story](#).

Austin may enter a formal partnership with the Great Springs Project - a non-profit creating a greenway trail of protected areas between **Austin** and **San Antonio** - after a city commission ruled the effort will 'serve the City's interest with respect to connectivity, transportation, conservation, and watershed protection.' [Story](#).

The once-booming petroleum industry in **Caldwell County** has left a legacy of production wells leaking methane, hydrogen sulfide, and other dangerous chemicals, according to a new report cited by the **Texas Tribune**. One researcher found gas levels so high she thought her equipment was broken: "It was off the scales." [Story](#).

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality has until Nov. 8 to overturn its earlier approval of that concrete batch plant in **Comal County**, near **New Braunfels**. State Senator Donna Campbell and Comal County commissioner Kevin Webb have weighed in on the case, which may turn on inadequate public notices. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"Recognizing the need is the primary condition for design."

– Charles Eames

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