



Monday Morning Report

September 25, 2023

INTERNAL

At last week's meeting of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee, members reviewed the status of 2023 projects to date, discussed upcoming initiatives in 2024, and had a presentation from **Travis County** judge Andy Brown about efforts to bring passenger rail to the Corridor. There were also discussions about new state and federal funding initiatives for electric vehicles, IH-35 re-construction developments, a review of the Amtrak Corridor Identification Program, and safety issues related to Union Pacific railroad. [Information](#).

INFRASTRUCTURE

Austin's Capital Metro is poised to award a five-year, \$754 million contract for the operation of its bus services to a **Paris**-based French company, Keolis Transit Services, at a board meeting later today (9/25). If the contract is awarded on schedule, Keolis could take over MetroBus and MetroRapid service in January 2024. [Story](#).

125-mph fast train service began last Friday from **Orlando-to-Miami**, making the trip 30-minutes faster (3 ½ hours) than the same trip on Florida's congested highways, for a ticket price starting at \$158 round-trip. Brightline's service is now the fastest US train outside the Northeast Corridor.

New York Times details [here](#). [More](#).

Amtrak just rolled out a 60-passenger electric bus designed for intercity travel capable of making a 260-mile journey on a single charge. The 45-foot-long bus, styled the Van Cool CX45e, is currently being used between **Bellingham** and **Seattle**, WA to supplement twice-daily Amtrak passenger train service on the route. [Story](#).

Researchers have made some 'shocking' discoveries about the longevity of the batteries used in electric vehicles. A **Seattle**-based battery analysis company took real-world data from 15,000 EV-powered vehicles of all types and found that those driven close to 100,000 miles still had at least 90% of their original range left. [Story](#). [Study](#).

Now that major re-insurers have slowed their backstopping of retail insurance companies, **Bloomberg** reports that soaring US fire and weather-hazard insurance rates are about to go still higher as the actual cost of potential climate change risk is reflected in homeowners' rates. [Story](#). Webinar on this topic later *this* week (9/29) [here](#).

Drought conditions in **Comal County** were a major topic of concern at last week's meeting of the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority board in **Seguin**. Large sections of the Guadalupe River from **Comfort** to **Canyon Lake** are drying up, officials were told, according to the **New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung** reporting. [Details](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

The **San Antonio Express-News** has launched an op-ed series with the University of Texas' Urban Future Lab exploring regional connections and challenges, the initial offering a suggestion that Alamo City pursue a 'South Triangle' strategy by developing greater ties to the **Rio Grande Valley, Laredo, and Monterrey** - thus extending the Texas Triangle cities of **Houston, Dallas, and Austin-San Antonio** southward to Mexico. [Opinion](#).

San Antonio International Airport scored a big win last week with the news of a new non-stop flight to Europe, beginning next summer, with German airline Condor offering flights to **Frankfurt**, Germany. "This is probably the most historic announcement we could make with regard to air service in **San Antonio**," said mayor Ron Nirenberg. City leaders say companies in pharmaceuticals, automaking, and cybersecurity will benefit. [Story](#).

Don't Austin My San Antonio?: The **Express-News** series on the emerging **Austin-San Antonio** mega-region had a curious segment last week about potential hazards of the relationship: could **San Antonio** really suffer possible cultural damage from a 'hipper' **Austin**? Food trucks as invaders, musicians as chess pieces. [Story](#).

Thought of the Week

"The only fight that matters is the struggle to take the world's chaos and make it mean something."

- Joe Hill

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