



Monday Morning Report

November 21, 2022

INTERNAL

The Executive Committee of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council met last week (11/16) to discuss and approve the 2023 Work Plan, a 2023 Legislative Agenda, various I-35 and I-10 projects, and to hear presentations about Amtrak's expansion program in Texas along I-35 from TxDOT Rail Division executive Chad Coburn, Texas Rail Advocates president Peter LeCody, and now private sector - former Lone Star Rail deputy director - consultant Joe Black. For more information or questions, email council@thecorridor.org.

COVID-19 UPDATE: This morning global cases reached 638,157,935 with 6,621,201 deaths. US cases are at 98,309,031 with 1,077,031 deaths (11/21/22) ([Johns Hopkins](#)). Texas reported 6,406,417 cases with 89,750 deaths, including in **Bexar County**: 550,249 cases with 6,368 deaths; **Guadalupe County**: 29,630 cases, still with 415 deaths; **Comal County**: 25,671 cases, still with 572 deaths; **Hays County**: 63,233 cases, with 458 deaths; **Travis County**: 248,069 cases, with 1,808 deaths; and **Williamson County**: 130,120 cases, with 918 deaths (11/18/22). ([TDHHS](#)). *Regional hospitalization-rate data found [here](#).*

INFRASTRUCTURE

Texas Speaker of the House Dade Phelan laid out his spending priorities for the next legislative session last week in **Houston**, stressing tax cuts and transportation infrastructure. He warned that just because there will be a budget surplus, the session won't be easy because of multiple competing interests - and urged activists to stay involved in the process. "You are at the table, or you are on the menu," he said. [Story](#).

TxDOT held a groundbreaking ceremony last week (11/15) to kick off construction of the IH-35 Central Expressway South project in **Austin** and **Travis County**, although not everybody was happy about it. The project develops additional managed lanes from Ben White Blvd to State Highway 45 Southeast. [Story](#).

The **Austin** Transit Partnership, the local government corporation formed to build Project Connect, appears to be re-thinking the whole idea of a tunnel downtown to house the light rail Orange and Blue Lines, according to the [Austin Monitor](#). "Whether it's underground, at-grade, potentially sections being elevated, we don't know what the solution is yet," said a spokesman. [Details](#).

The US Environmental Protection Agency moved **Bexar County** from 'marginal' to 'moderate' ozone nonattainment category after the region failed to significantly improve air quality over the last three years. The move, widely anticipated, may trigger annual vehicle emissions inspections for **San Antonio** motorists. [Story](#).

The **New Braunfels** city council voted last week to relinquish its authority to enforce subdivision regulations within its extraterritorial jurisdiction in **Guadalupe County** (in place by agreement since

2002), capturing administrative cost savings but potentially losing some fees relating to parkland development. [Story](#).

Tesla insists that it will release Full Self-Driving technology by the end of this year, but a team of **New York Times** writers spent a day in **Jacksonville**, Fla. using the software with a Tesla enthusiast and found the experience unsettling. Their verdict is that the technology is not-quite-ready-for-prime-time, and they explain why. [Story](#).

United Airlines is launching the first-ever electric air shuttle between **Newark's** Liberty International Airport and downtown **Manhattan** in 2025, slicing usual automobile commute-time from over an hour to just ten minutes. United will use the Pier 6 Downtown Manhattan Heliport, just above Battery Park, as a base. [Story](#).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

In preparation for releasing an unusually high number of new contracting opportunities, VIA Metropolitan Transit in **San Antonio** is hosting a free Contracting Opportunities Forum Tuesday, Dec. 6th from 8:30-12:00 noon. The scope of the contracts to be issued encompass a wide variety of projects, including Advanced Rapid Transit efforts. Further information and registration forms can be found [here](#).

Richard Perez is stepping down after 15 years as president of the **San Antonio** Chamber of Commerce at the end of this year. A former chairman and executive committee-member of the **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council, Perez led **San Antonio's** largest business organization during some turbulent periods, always earning high marks for candor, superior executive skills, good humor, and charm. We wish him well. [Story](#).

For more than two decades **Austin** entertainer and author Turk Pipkin has been raising money for school and water project construction in Kenya through the non-profit, Nobility Project. Tomorrow, Tuesday, November 22 from 5:30-7:00 pm, he kicks off a 'Turn Wine Into Water' initiative at Patrizi's, 1705 Cuernavaca. [Details](#).

Thought of the Week

"Trust in oneself and one's abilities is the secret of success."

- Michael Gelb

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