



Monday Morning Report

December 18, 2023

INTERNAL

The **Austin-San Antonio** Corridor Council Executive Committee meets *this* Wednesday (12/20) at 2:00 pm via Zoom. Former executive director of the Lower Colorado River Authority Joe Beal will discuss the long-term water resources outlook for the Corridor, including the potential for shallow aquifer brine desalination and capturing overflow flood waters. **Travis County** commissioner Brigid Shea, just returned from the COP28 meeting in **Dubai**, reports on the outcome of that conference. Zoom invitation [here](#) (Passcode: 542522). **Draft Agenda**.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The county judges of **Travis, Bexar, and Dallas Counties** all voiced a joint negative reaction to news last week that the Federal Railroad Administration's Corridor Identification and Development Program failed to approve a TxDOT application for funding of a **San Antonio to Dallas/Ft. Worth** passenger rail connection, calling the shutout 'a significant missed opportunity to support responsible growth.' **Story. More. Still More.**

Meanwhile, reporting from **Washington DC**-based newspaper **The Hill** says passenger trains could help combat climate change by getting people out of cars and planes - but only in selected regions of the US including **Dallas, Houston**, and specifically, **Austin**, according to quoted experts. **Story.**

Charles Benavidez is TxDOT's new **San Antonio** district engineer, overseeing planning, designing, construction, operation, and maintenance of the state transportation system in 12 surrounding counties - a \$4 billion transportation project portfolio - the second largest in the state. For details, contact Laura.Lopez@txdot.gov.

More Trouble For Cruise: General Motors' robotaxi subsidiary, which withdrew its fleet of driverless cars from US cities - including **Austin** - following a serious pedestrian-dragging incident in **San Francisco** in October, has dismissed nine senior executives amid an ongoing safety investigation, **Reuters** reports. **Story.**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (and Other News)

As office spaces sit empty and housing costs soar, the **Texas Tribune** says more developers are converting former offices into apartments, with at least 13 such projects underway in **Dallas** and **Austin**. Nationwide, 20,000 office-to-residential unit conversions have occurred since 2016; and at least 21,000 more are in the hopper. **Story.**

Austin-San Antonio's neighbor to the south, **Corpus Christi**, will become the nation's largest exporting port for US oil, the **Express-News** reports. A currently underway \$682 million dredging project, expected to be completed in early 2024, will make the city's 54-foot ship channel deeper by at least seven feet than any other port on the Gulf of Mexico. It's also the world's third-largest pathway for crude exports after Saudi Arabia and Russia. **Story**.

Using studies of **San Diego**, the **Brookings Institution** says the growing field of **climate analytics** can help local governments adopt a more proactive approach to change by identifying risks, developing climate plans, and forming strategies to limit harm from intense storms, wildfires, and other weather-related events. **Report**.

Mexican president Lopez-Obrador opened the first 290-mile section of his planned \$20 billion, 950-mile tourism passenger rail project last week, on an already-existing rail line from **Cancun** to **Campeche** along the Caribbean coast. In November, he announced new rules requiring private freight rail lines to offer passenger service. **Story**.

New Braunfels chamber of commerce president Jonathan Packer told the **Herald-Zeitung** last week that his agency was adopting a broader, more regional approach to economic development activities, citing housing, transportation infrastructure, and legislative affairs as arenas calling for more regional cooperation. **Story**.

Thought of the Week

"You can tell a lot about a person by the way they handle three things: a rainy day, lost luggage and tangled Christmas tree lights."

- Maya Angelou

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