



September 1, 2023

Council Member
City of Austin
P.O. Box 1088
Austin, TX 78767

Dear Council Member,

We are pleased to provide you with brief updates on the 2023 activities of the Greater Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council and our proposed project list for the rest of 2023 and 2024, as well as some additional information about the Corridor Council.

As always, we appreciate the membership and participation of the city of Austin in the Corridor Council and look forward to working with you and the city's staff over the coming year. Our mission remains to pursue long-term infrastructure development and economic prosperity, to promote regional cooperation among local jurisdictions to save tax dollars, and to respond to growth in a manner that best preserves our local environment and quality of life.

In the past year the Corridor Council has been active in responding to new funding initiatives from the federal government on intercity passenger rail, the transition from traditional to electric vehicles, and more climate-oriented approaches to transportation and community development. At the state level, there has been funding progress on vital regional highway projects like IH-35, I-10, SH 123, and SH 46, and, more broadly, with TxDOT's proposed participation in the federal-state partnership for freight and passenger rail development and a statewide charging network for electric vehicles.

During 2024 we anticipate continuing our efforts to bring high-capacity transit and transportation improvements to the Corridor Communities, heightened sensitivity to the need for expanding and conserving regional water resources, developing better coordination and cooperation among regional airports, and – responding to national trends in the freight railroad industry – work towards increased safety, efficiency, and emergency preparedness along the rail lines in the Corridor.

Please contact us should you desire additional details on any of these matters, if you would like to suggest other activities for the Corridor Council to pursue, or if you have any questions or concerns.

Best Wishes,

John Thomaidēs, Chairman
Former Mayor of San Marcos

Ross Milloy, President
The Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council
council@thecorridor.org

We Educate. We Advocate. We Convene.



MILESTONES

FOUNDING

Formed in 1984 to serve as a catalyst for ideas and projects in the areas of infrastructure, economic development and regional cooperation.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Work to secure funding, including almost \$4 billion in infrastructure funding for the Austin-San Antonio Corridor over the last 20 years.



REGIONAL COOPERATION

Host receptions, luncheons, and subject-specific forums for the discussion of new ideas and projects.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Support Economic Development arms of our local communities by acting as a catalyst for new or emerging industries.



1984 - 1995

Cuatro Caminos Annual Conferences (Monterrey/Saltito)
Advocates For North American Free Trade Act & Signing Ceremony
Trade Delegations Leading to Toyota in San Antonio
Financed Initial Feasibility Study of State Highway 130
'Local Issues, Regional Solutions I' Conference (1,000 participants)

1995 - 2005

Led Campaign to Build State Highway 130 (\$32.8 million)
Helped to Secure Over \$3 billion For Construction
NAFTA Trade Conferences (Rockefeller Foundation, North American Institute)
Funded First Austin-San Antonio Commuter Rail Feasibility Study (\$450,000)
Wrote and Passed State Legislation Creating Regional Rail District
Developed '2020: Vision' 22-county Regional Parks & Trails Plan

2005 - 2015

Created Lone Star Rail (\$60 million for engineering and environmental)
Created Digital Convergence Initiative (First Mobile Technologies Conference)
"Catching The Wave: Nano-BioTechnology Conferences I & II"
Hosted National Regional Rail Conference with German Marshall Fund
Negotiated & Executed 10 Tax Increment Financing Districts for Rail District
'Local Issues, Regional Solutions II' (1,000 participants)
Launched Texas Greenbelt Coalition For Rural Technology Connectivity
Initiated \$4.5 million Corridor Improvement ITS Plan For IH-35

2015 - 2019

Developed Regional/Hill Country Impacts Rail Study with University of Texas
Conducted US 281 Survey and Improvements Plan
Catalyst For Emerging "Connected/Autonomous Vehicles Technologies" (CAV)
Advocacy Program on IH-35 Improvements Plan (San Antonio)
Legislative Advocacy Programs Props 1 & 7 Increased Texas Transportation Funding
Local Ordinance Effort to make IH-35 a "Hands-Free" Corridor
Helped develop Texas Emissions Reduction Program Methodology For Rail Projects



2023 Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council Activity Highlights

- Developed and gathered 13 bipartisan signatures for a Texas Congressional Delegation letter to Federal Railroad Administration urging inclusion of Texas Triangle Cities (including Austin-San Antonio) in Amtrak's multi-billion-dollar intercity passenger rail Corridor Identification and Development Program.
- Led an ultimately successful advocacy campaign encouraging TxDOT to participate in the federal Corridor Identification and Development Intercity Rail Program, developed related documentation, letters of support, and personal contacts with relevant officials (Senate, House Transportation Committee chairs, TxDOT staff and TxDOT chairman), worked with North Texas COG, Texas Rail Advocates, and others.
- Worked on behalf of Travis and Bexar County officials with legal and engineering consultants to develop a proposed 'roadmap' for a local jurisdiction-driven program for regional passenger rail development in the San Antonio to Dallas/Ft. Worth corridor, including Austin.
- Served on TxDOT's 'Interstate 10 Border-to-Border Study' Steering and Central Working Group Committees, resulting in access improvement recommendations to US 290, IH-35/I-10 intersections, SH 123 to SH 130 and SH 46, creating parallel reliever routes for IH-10 and reducing traffic on IH-35.
- Developed documentation and support letters to Texas US Senate and House members on an exclusion for San Antonio International Airport from the so-called 'perimeter rule' limiting access to Reagan National Airport in Washington DC.
- Continued participation on the Advisory Board of the Texas Electric Transportation Resources Alliance, including advocacy efforts with Texas Legislature on electric vehicle charging issues, road-use fees, development of the statewide charging network, and the Regional Compact for local jurisdictions' fleet transitions.
- Other 88th Texas Legislature advocacy included support for the Texas Rail Relocation Fund to match federal dollars available for intercity rail, state employee telecommuting flexibility, Texas Mobility Fund reforms, and opposition to legislation limiting the authorities of local jurisdictions (HB 2127).
- Initiated discussions with Austin and San Antonio Fire Departments regarding emergency preparedness planning for a potential major hazardous materials incident along the Union Pacific rail line in the Austin-San Antonio Corridor. The first meeting to plan for a table-top exercise should occur in September 2023.
- Worked with the Austin Area Research Organization (AARO) on improved networking between Austin-San Antonio civic and business leadership, a retrospective analysis of the Envision Central Texas initiative, and a presentation on approaches to the implementation of Austin-San Antonio passenger rail.
- Continued joint effort with Capital Area Rural Transportation System and Alamo Regional Transit to develop support for a public transit interurban bus service option between Austin and San Antonio.

- Organized four joint meetings with leadership of the North Texas Council of Governments to coordinate planning and advocacy efforts on behalf of San Antonio-Dallas/Ft. Worth passenger rail development (including Austin) with TxDOT and the Federal Railroad Administration.
- Participated in the two-year University of Texas Department of Architecture Graduate-Level Community Planning Program's "Practicum on Austin-San Antonio Passenger Rail," critiqued resulting report with students and faculty, and circulated the report to regional elected officials.
- Participated with former San Antonio mayor Henry Cisneros in the television documentary "*San Antonio to Austin: An Emerging Mega-Region*," which aired in both cities on public television in August 2023.
- Hosted multiple presentations on economic development issues involving workforce development, water resources (Harte Foundation for Gulf Studies, Barton Springs Aquifer Authority, etc.), grant opportunities for electric vehicle repowering or replacements for local jurisdictions, or residential and commercial developments along IH-35 between Austin and San Antonio.
- Published 32 editions of the Monday Morning Report, a weekly emailed newsletter to members and regional opinion leaders about Infrastructure issues, Economic Development, and Internal activities of the Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council. About 50 of these weekly reports are published each year.



2023-24 Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council Proposed Projects

- Continue ongoing initiatives with the Federal Railroad Administration, Amtrak, and TxDOT to develop enhanced passenger rail service between Austin, San Antonio, and other regional communities.
- Forge legislative alliances among Laredo, Austin, San Antonio, Dallas-Ft. Worth, and Houston regarding efforts to access federal dollars, finance the Texas Railroad Relocation Fund, and connect the Texas Triangle cities with improved freight and passenger rail services.
- Advocacy efforts with local jurisdictions, TxDOT, and federal agencies for improved highway freight capacity and access to Austin/San Antonio-area businesses and manufacturers through the TxDOT I-10 Steering Committee oversight of the 2023 TxDOT I-10 Implementation Plan.
- Monitor the various new construction projects on IH-35, advocate for inclusion of continuous High Occupancy Vehicle lanes connecting Austin-San Antonio; developing connector routes from IH-35 to State Highway 130; seek opportunities to add value to efforts such as potential funding solutions for 'Cap and Stitch'-style and 'Greening IH-35' enhancements for local communities.
- Continue serving on the Advisory Board of the Texas Electric Transportation Alliance and pursue adoption of the South Central Texas Regional Compact to aid and expedite fleet transitions by local jurisdictions.
- Pursue increased attention from TxDOT and Union Pacific to rail/road intersection safety, traffic-blockage, and hazardous materials transport issues including federal/state funding for aggressive grade-separation initiative for the Austin-San Antonio Corridor.
- Given the recent rash of rail accidents in the US due to changes within the railroad industry, work with regional emergency preparedness teams to assess risks, verify plume analysis & evacuation protocols, develop response plans, and ensure coordination, cooperation, and communication in the event of a catastrophic rail accident along the Union Pacific and BNSF corridors through populated areas.
- Establish a Regional Airport Development Coordination Working Group to develop improved coordination and communication among regional airport officials designed to improve efficiency, avoid duplication of resources or unproductive competition, save tax dollars, and enhance the passenger experience.
- Monitor new federal legislation for opportunities in infrastructure funding: (IH-35, US 281, connector routes to SH 130); rail relocation, safety, & passenger rail enhancements; the Re-Connect Communities Program (IH 35 'Cap and Stitch'); participate in Austin and San Antonio-to-DC federal advocacy efforts.
- Increased advocacy and awareness efforts regarding limited water resources in the Austin-San Antonio Corridor including conservation, duplication (access to more diversified water resources), technological innovation, and support efforts such as the Great Springs Project to protect natural ecological assets.
- Begin discussions with Austin-San Antonio Corridor Communities' intergovernmental affairs officials on developing a common consensus agenda for the 2025 89th State Legislative session.



The Austin–San Antonio Corridor Council

The Austin-San Antonio Corridor Council is a public/private, non-profit partnership of political jurisdictions, universities, public authorities, and businesses dedicated to long-term infrastructure development, economic development, and regional cooperation for communities along Interstate 35 from San Antonio to Georgetown. The Council serves as a non-partisan forum for discussion, research, advocacy, and action on issues of regional significance.

Our mission is to promote the economic health of the Corridor region and to develop the infrastructure required by increased population growth in a manner that preserves our environment and quality of life. The Council's goals are member-driven and member-supportive.

The Corridor Council's Executive Committee is evenly divided between elected officials and private citizens preparing to meet this region's unprecedented growth with vision, technical expertise, and the power of cooperative planning.

The Corridor Council is the only non-profit partnership linking the many public and private sector assets of the Austin-San Antonio Corridor, an independent forum for resolving regional issues and seizing regional opportunities.

Current Project Highlights:

- Coordinating efforts to bring enhanced Amtrak passenger rail services to Austin-San Antonio via the federal Corridor Identification & Development Program
- Pursuing other high-capacity transit options between San Antonio/Austin/Dallas
- Promoting continuous High Occupancy Vehicle lanes on IH-35 from Austin-San Antonio
- Funding solutions for IH-35 "Cut & Cap" effort, including private sector involvement
- Exploring inter-agency emergency response capacity for Union Pacific rail line incidents
- Raising awareness of rail/road crossing safety issues/traffic blockages in the Corridor
- 'Chokepoint' financing from TxDOT/FHWA on IH-35, Loop 1604 & US 281
- Developing more connector routes from IH-35 to State Highway 130
- Continuing workshop series on Autonomous and Connected Vehicles
- Role as Advisory Board Member, Texas Electric Transportation Resources Alliance
- Continued role on South Central Texas Regional Compact on EV transition
- Opening discussion regarding increased coordination between regional airports
- 'Greening IH-35 Project' to plant 10,000 trees between AUS/SAT on Interstate

Past Projects:

- Led campaign to develop and build \$3 billion State Highway 130 Austin to San Antonio
- Helped secure nearly \$4 billion for regional infrastructure and economic development
- Drafted legislation creating a Rail Division at the Texas Department of Transportation
- Drafted legislation creating Lone Star Rail District and secured \$60 million to develop
- Active participation in the creation of North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)
- Hosted international Quatro Caminos Conferences with presidents of US and Mexico
- Testimony to Legislature and US Congress on issues of regional significance
- Leading advocate for planning efforts related to Connected & Autonomous Vehicles
- Hosted over 100 regional conferences, workshops, advocacy events, & forums
- Publish a weekly newsletter for elected officials and civic leaders in the Corridor