

County Judge Nelson Wolff
State of the County Address
October 6, 2021

COVID

Three surges of COVID-19- Summer-2020 (1267), Winter-2020-21 (1520), Delta variant (1466) Fall 2021, which is a crisis of the unvaccinated.

Over 80% of those hospitalized are unvaccinated and over 95% of those COVID related deaths were unvaccinated.

For whatever reason all three surges go up for two months and then recede for two months. Some combination of virus biology and human behavior.

Since the start of the pandemic 313,378 COVID cases, 4541 deaths, total of over 31,600 people have been hospitalized, and numerous others have long term effects.

Mayor Nirenberg and I have worked closely together for the past two years—we've had 312 daily media briefings, participated in 323 conference calls with health officials and reviewed 496 COVID situation reports.

Road to recovery – down from 1466 COVID patients to 553 as of yesterday. Our weekly positivity rate dropped to 3.9% and overall. Risk level moved down from moderate to mild.

If you have not been vaccinated, please do. We do not want to see a winter surge caused by the unvaccinated.

Thank you Mayor Nirenberg

Thank you to District Attorney Joe Gonzales and Larry Roberson for their support on lawsuit and drafting 26 emergency orders

Thank you to George Hernandez- and Bill Phillips UHS- mass vaccination at the Wonderland site, some 500,000 shots and now giving booster shots.

Thank you Larry Schlesinger with Texas Biomed and his team of 65 PhD scientists for their research on the virus, including coronaviruses, from which vaccines are developed. They are the only independent non-profit infectious disease research institution in the United States with an 80-year history of dedication to eradicating infections around the world.

Thank you to all of our hospital CEOs and all the health care workers who have risked their lives to save COVID patients.

Baptist health system – Matthew Stone
Christus Santa Rosa – Dean Alexander
Methodist Healthcare – Allen Harrison
University Health system – George Hernandez

Thank you to Derrick Howard, and the Arena Advisory Board-County Freeman Coliseum, arena and expo halls have been used for COVID testing, monoclonal infusions, and a field hospital.

Thank you to the Sheriff Salazar for his support and partnership with UHS in setting up testing/vaccinations for the jail.

Metro Health – Colleen Bridger, Dr. Woo, and Claude Jacob

UT Health- President Bill Henrich, Dr. Ruth Berggren and Dr. Barbara Taylor
Thank you to City Manager Erik Walsh, County Manager David Smith, SAFD Chief Hood and Eric Epley, STRAC

Thank you to Nicole Erfurth

Now is time to build for the future

Adopted a \$2.79 budget in September including \$1.28 billion in capital projects

San Pedro Creek

We continue to make great progress restoring the ecosystem of the San Pedro creek. Phase 1 of the project, from the tunnel inlet to Houston Street is complete.

Phase 2 from Houston St to Cesar Chavez is scheduled to be finished by the end of next year.

Phase 3, from Guadalupe Street to South Alamo is also under construction. The final phase that will ultimately connect the Creek to the San Antonio River is currently under development. We are targeting to have the entire project complete by 2023.

Restoration of creek has spurred economic development. UTSA Data Science Center, SAISD Headquarters, Texas Public Radio, the Federal Courthouse, the Alameda Theater, and several apartment complexes have been completed or are under construction along the Creek. The County is providing land on the Creek for the UTSA School of Business.

Regional Mobility Authority-appointed by Commissioners Court

Bexar County Engineer Renee Green is also overseeing 13 RMA projects totaling \$196 million to leverage \$271 million in roadway improvements.

Super Public Improvement District appointed by Commissioners Court

Building a new, two-lane 7- mile long connection of Hwy 211 that will connect Culebra Road and Potranco will open a huge area for development. A \$23 million project that is projected to be completed in late 2022.

BiblioTech education library at Fox Tech Campus

We are building a new BiblioTech digital library that will serve the three schools residing on Fox Tech Campus – CAST Tech, the Advanced Learning Academy, Tech, and a health and law magnet school.

Tracy has raised \$1.5 million to build the unique all digital library. Director Laura Cole is managing it and construction is underway for 8,400 sq. ft. library that will include a recording studio, study rooms, community room, makers' space and robotics room

Workforce Training Center at Brooks Base

Bexar County is concentrating on creating talented workforce for manufacturing. We are building a 30,000 sq. ft. building training academy at Brooks Base in a

partnership with TXFAME, an organization that includes 10 private manufacturing companies

New infrastructure program

- A new 10-year infrastructure program is included in the adopted budget. The program totals \$617 million and includes 87 projects.

Roads

- Funding in the amount of \$187.7 million is included to fund a 10-year roads program.

Flood control

- Twelve flood control projects are adopted at a cost of \$110.7 million.

Creeks and trails

- Funding in the amount of \$244.2 million is adopted for 27 creeks and trails. 35 new miles of hike/bike trails and restoring 12.5 miles of rivers and creeks, connecting our community and spurring new economic activity
- These projects will restore a degraded ecosystem; improve water quality and flood control; promote the addition of trails and other recreational amenities; connect neighborhoods, public institutions and the existing linear creekways trail network; and serve as a catalyst for future economic development along the river and creeks.

Thank you to Commissioner Justin Rodriguez

Parks Master Plan

On July 13, 2021, Commissioners Court approved the 2021 Bexar county parks master plan. Funding in the amount of \$74.4 million is included in the adopted budget for 22 projects.

Bexar County Hospital District capital projects

Construction continues on its new 12-story women's and children's hospital, on track to open in 2023. The new hospital will offer the level of advanced care available exclusively.

- The hospital will include a dedicated children’s emergency department. A team of OB/GYN specialists will staff the emergency department.
- The new hospital will be home to University Health’s Level IV Neonatal Intensive Care Unit and Level IV Maternity Center. These teams have earned the highest designations for advanced care in the State of Texas.
- On September 25, University Hospital purchased 80 acres for \$13.4 million, located in west Bexar County. Later they purchased 42.5 acres for \$11.5 million located in northeast Bexar County. These two investments would provide the sites for future hospitals.
- Commissioner Rebeca Clay Flores helped lead efforts for UHS to invest \$10 million to purchase 68 acres on the south side for a new hospital next to Texas A&M. New housing development going up. This will bring expanded educational opportunities and high-paying health career opportunities for Texas A&M -San Antonio and its students.

Leveraging County funds with TxDOT

Over the years Bexar has invested over \$500 million in TxDOT projects that has leveraged hundreds of million in state funds.

I-35 expansion

- A \$1.5 billion investment in expanding ih-35 on the northeast corridor from loop 410 to loop 1604
- Will create an upper level as well as HOV lanes to alleviate congestion
- Project will break ground next year and is projected to be complete in 2027

Loop 1604 expansion

- From Bandera road to ih-35 on the far Northside
- A more than \$1 billion investment in expanding loop 1604 from 4 lanes to 10 lanes as well as HOV lanes
- Project will be done in 5 segments over the next 10 years

COSA bond program

- The City’s 2022 bond package is expected to total **\$1.2 billion**. It is expected to be on the May ballot.
- Six separate propositions have been proposed by staff: streets and bridges, drainage and flood control, parks and recreation, municipal facilities, public safety and health facilities and housing.

- Projects are being considered for the sunken garden theater, the zoo, the botanical garden and museums.
- Community bond committees should be appointed by Oct. 13, when staff is scheduled to return to council with for a deeper, detailed discussion.

ARPA funds

- \$500 million in request and \$120 million available. Will start making decisions on expenditures in next two months.
- We have invested in SA Digital Connects, a public/private/ community investment to bridge the digital divide and bring digital access to all of Bexar County. 25% of Bexar county residents are disconnected from digital resources. Working with the City of San Antonio to lay digital fiber.

Economic development

- Our unemployment rate is now at 4.8%, below the national rate of 5.2%
- While we are not where we want to be, we are on a trajectory to be back where we were before the pandemic.
- I talked with Navistar plant director rod spencer last week. Will start production in the first quarter and having 600 people working by end of quarter as they increased production of trucks, including their first electric truck.
- Commissioner Trish DeBerry took lead in providing \$25 million in county funds for the \$250 million dollar Alamo museum. The project would have an economic impact on San Antonio in the amount of \$430 million and create 3,495 new jobs.
- Commissioner Calvert took lead in setting aside \$40 million for a downtown connection between san Pedro creek and the San Antonio River. Will need city and private sector financial support. The \$450 million Dream Hotel and the five sky scrapers will be on both sides of this link. These new high rises will help stimulate the north end of downtown.

Thank you to Commissioner Trish DeBerry and Commissioner Tommy Calvert.

I believe we have a bright future ahead of us by building for the future. Our economic expansion will be driven in part by the over \$2 billion in county and city capital projects, by Bexar County hospital district investments, by Federal American Recovery Funds, and by state investments in infrastructure.