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Mayor Steve Adler: I-35 corridor destined to become one ‘megaregion’

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With economic growth along the I-35 corridor showing no signs of slowing down, Austin Mayor Steve Adler believes it will become a “megaregion” with an interlocking economy, a shared ecosystem and integrated transportation system.

The Texas economy is growing at a faster pace than the national average, but Adler noted that Austin has been listed as the fastest-growing U.S. metro area over the past four years.

Meanwhile, San Antonio is expected to add 1.1 million more people by 2040.

As the nation’s metropolitan areas expand over the next several decades, Adler told 600 people attending the Austin-San Antonio Growth Summit on Sept. 4 that boundaries and borders will begin to blur.

“This corridor is going to grow into one large metro area, not just as an Austin to San Antonio corridor but as a region from Waco to South Texas,” Adler predicted.

Adler said Austin, San Antonio and surrounding cities must work together to capitalize on that growth.

“We need to keep thinking about what the world will look like 40 to 50 years from now,” Adler said. “We must begin to think of ourselves as partners and plan for our shared future so that we can truly distinguish ourselves in the state, nation and world.”



City of Austin Mayor Steve Adler

CARLOS JAVIER SANCHEZ | SABJ

But along with great opportunities come great challenges such as water and transportation, he added.

“By planning together, we have a greater chance of being successful,” Adler said.

With an estimated 250,000 college students attending schools from Georgetown to San Antonio, Austin and San Antonio must think of themselves not as two markets but rather a single workforce, Adler said.

“We are educating the world here and this is a tremendous asset on which we must capitalize,” Adler said.

Austin and San Antonio both enjoy international immigration and investment, but they also have a strategic location as a gateway to Latin America, he added.

“There are so many opportunities for collaboration,” the mayor said. But with traffic on I-35 already a concern, Adler said integrated transportation is one of the most important issues to tackle.

The Lone Star Rail Project would create a passenger commuter rail from Georgetown to San Antonio while another proposed rail line would move people from San Antonio to Monterrey, Mexico.

Adler said he supports passenger rail for the region, be it commuter rail that makes frequent stops or a nonstop high-speed rail line.

“Imagine what it would be like to hop on the bullet train in Austin and go to San Antonio to see the Alamo,” Adler said.

Sergio Chapa covers the energy industry for the newspaper.

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