

- SUBJECT:** Rural and urban transit districts, reestablishing public transportation fund
- COMMITTEE:** Transportation — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Alexander, Bosse, Alonzo, Edwards, Moreno, Siebert
0 nays
1 present, not voting — Clemons
2 absent — Price, Uher
- WITNESSES:** For — John McBeth, Michael Plaster, Texas Transit Association
Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** State law does not designate a funding source for the 41 rural and 25 small urban transit systems operating in Texas, nor do the districts have a stable source of local funding. The state has abolished the public transportation fund created by the 64th Legislature to administer grant monies received from public and private sources.

Unlike metropolitan transit authorities, the state's rural and small urban transit authorities do not have a governing statute regulating them.
- DIGEST:** HB 2588 would create the Rural and Urban Transit Act, governing rural and small urban public transit systems. It also would reestablish the Public Transportation Fund as a fund to be used by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to support rural and small urban transit districts. In addition to grants to the state from public and private sources, the Legislature could appropriate money to the fund from the portion of the state highway fund that is not dedicated by the Texas Constitution. Interest from the public transportation fund would be deposited into the general revenue fund.

The new act would specify how rural and small urban transit districts can be created and expanded and would govern rural transit systems currently organized and operated by a variety of organizations such as county

nonprofit organizations, agencies of the state, community action agencies, area aging agencies, councils of governments, municipal transit departments, regional planning councils or public entities created by inter-local agreement.

The bill would define public transportation as transportation of passengers and their hand-carried packages or baggage by any means of surface, fixed guideway, or underground transportation or transit, except aircraft, taxicab, ambulance or emergency vehicle.

Rural transit districts would refer to rural public transportation providers that receive public transportation funds through TxDOT on September 1, 1994.

Urban transit district would mean a local governmental body or a political subdivision of the state that operates a public transportation system in an urbanized area with a population between 50,000 and 200,000, according to the most recent federal census.

The bill would take effect September 1, 1995.

NOTES:

Also on today's calendar is HB 2496 by Kubiak, relating to funding of mass transportation projects and eliminating a requirement that state appropriations to the public transportation fund be matched with federal money.