

SUBJECT: Austin Capital Metro board composition and appointment

COMMITTEE: Urban Affairs — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — Hill, Bailey, Burnam, Clark, Ehrhardt, Garcia, Hodge, Shields, Wohlgemuth
0 nays

WITNESSES: For — None
Against — Gus Garcia

BACKGROUND : Capital Metro provides mass transportation services to Austin and some surrounding counties and cities. Its board has seven members, five appointed by the Austin City Council, one by the Travis County commissioners, and one by mayors of outlying cities in Capital Metro's service area.

DIGEST: CSHB 883 would add to the Transportation Code a new section addressing the composition of the board and appointment of board members for a metropolitan rapid transit authority that was confirmed before July 1, 1985, in which the principal municipality has a population of less than 750,000 — Austin.

The board would be composed of nine members. Five members would be appointed by the Austin City Council, and one by each of the following entities: Travis County Commissioners Court; the Austin Transportation Study; a panel composed of mayors of municipalities in Travis County, other than Austin, served by Capital Metro; the mayor of Austin; and a panel composed of Williamson County mayors and county judges of areas served by Capital Metro.

CSHB 883 would take effect on September 1, 1997. Governmental entities entitled to make additional appointments would be required to make the initial appointments as soon as practicable after the effective date. The board would be authorized to reduce the term of initial appointments to allow for staggered terms.

SUPPORTERS SAY: CSHB 883 would ensure that residents of Williamson County have fair representation on Capital Metro's board of directors. Williamson County, including the cities of Leander and Cedar Park and the Anderson Mill area, is a part of Capital Metro's service area and its residents pay taxes to Capital Metro. It is only fair that they also have some input into how their tax money is spent and what services they receive. This is particularly true now that Capital Metro is planning expanded services to Williamson County, possibly including a multi-million dollar light rail project.

Capital Metro is a regional transportation authority and needs regional representation to make proper decisions. CSHB 883 would provide for this by allowing outlying cities and county judges appoint one board member and the metropolitan planning organization, which represents the whole service area, to appoint one board member.

It is misleading to state that Williamson County residents do not pay sufficient taxes to merit representation on the Capital Metro board. Williamson County residents often shop in Austin, and Austin has annexed many Williamson County businesses located along U.S. 183.

OPPONENTS SAY: CSHB 883 would give Williamson County a level of input into the operations of Capital Metro that is disproportionate to the amount of taxes it pays to support those operations.

NOTES: The committee substitute created a new section within the Transportation Code and authorized the metropolitan planning organization to appoint a member.