SUBJECT:	Authorizing public schools to use vans for transporting students
COMMITTEE:	Public Education — favorable, without amendment
VOTE:	8 ayes — Sadler, Dutton, Culberson, Hernandez, Hochberg, Price, Rhodes, Williamson
	0 nays
	1 absent — Uher
SENATE VOTE:	On final passage, Local and Uncontested Calendar, April 17 — 31-0
WITNESSES:	For — Julian Shaddix, Texas Association of Secondary School Principals
	Against — None
BACKGROUND:	The Education Code stipulates that only school buses or chartered motor buses may be used when 10 or more students are transported in one vehicle. Passenger cars may be used to transport fewer than 10 students, so long as the number of passengers does not exceed the vehicle's capacity and each passenger is secured by a safety belt.
DIGEST:	SB 517 would stipulate that school buses or motor buses would have to be used to transport more than 15 students in one vehicle; passenger cars or passenger vans could be used to transport fewer than 15 students.
	SB 517 would take effect beginning with the 1997-1998 school year.
SUPPORTERS SAY:	SB 517 would help school districts save money and reduce wear and tear on school buses by providing statutory authority for schools to transport small groups of students in passenger vans rather than buses. Currently, many schools use huge buses to transport small groups of students because the law does not specify that they can use vans. At a recent statewide student council conference, for example, the streets of Austin were lined with full-sized school districts from throughout the state, even though attendance at the conference was limited to 10 students from each district. One district has to use a full-sized bus to send one student and one driver to the

conference. For long trips in particular, this represents a tremendous and unnecessary waste of money. SB 517 would solve this problem by making it clear that school districts can use vans to transport smaller groups of students.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.