

- SUBJECT:** Revisions to the statewide transportation plan
- COMMITTEE:** Transportation — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Alexander, Siebert, Edwards, Hamric, Hawley, Hill, Uher  
0 nays  
2 absent — Y. Davis, Noriega
- WITNESSES:** None
- BACKGROUND:** Transportation Code, sec. 201.061 requires the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to develop a statewide transportation plan that provides for all modes of transportation, including highways, turnpikes, aviation, mass transportation, railroads, high-speed railroads, and water traffic. TxDOT completed the first version of the plan in 1994.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 1918 would require TxDOT to incorporate additional factors into the statewide transportation plan and to submit a revised plan to the governor and the Legislature by January 1, 2001. In developing revisions, TxDOT would have to seek written and oral comments from transportation industry representatives and consider issues raised by staff or representatives of any transportation council, center, or institution in this state.
- Additional factors to be considered in revising the plan would include:
- ! recommendations for linking transportation facilities, rural communities, and the border region within the state to national and international markets;
  - ! strategies to eliminate congestion at international border crossings in the state and to make ports on the Texas Gulf Coast the ports of choice for commerce in the United States;
  - ! addressing options for funding the plan; and
  - ! recommending ways to facilitate access to ports on the Pacific Coast of Mexico.

The bill would remove the requirement for TxDOT to consider high-speed railroads in the plan. It also would remove the requirement for TxDOT to seek opinions and assistance from other state agencies or local governments and to enter into memoranda of understanding related to transportation planning. The bill would require TxDOT to ensure that the plan meets guidelines for statewide transportation planning under federal law (23 U.S.C. Section 135, as amended).

CSHB 1918 would require the Texas Transportation Commission to appoint an advisory committee to coordinate and oversee the development of the statewide transportation plan. The commission would have to appoint committee members representing transportation interests from different regions of the state, including at least one resident of the border region. Committee members would serve at the will of the commission. They could be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred while performing the work of the committee but could not receive compensation.

This bill would take effect September 1, 1999.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

The additional factors that CSHB 1918 would require the state transportation plan to include were recommended in the comptroller's 1998 report entitled *Bordering the Future* and by the Texas Strategic Economic Development Commission. Serious consideration of these factors today would enable the state to benefit from transportation improvements in the future. TxDOT has committed to a revision of the state transportation plan as described in the bill.

This bill would allow TxDOT to codify the future direction of transportation planning in the state on the basis of these recommendations. For example, the bill would remove high-speed trains from the plan because there is a clear consensus across the state that high-speed trains are not integral to state transportation needs in the near future.

An advisory committee is needed to incorporate the additional factors into the plan effectively through consultations with transportation councils and industry representatives. The commission would do the best job in appointing committee members based on professional qualifications.

The plan and any future revisions need to meet federal guidelines for

transportation planning to ensure that the plan complies with federal law. This would not have a substantive effect on current planning efforts.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

The time allowed for submitting a revised state transportation plan is very short. This strict deadline could affect the quality of the plan submitted to the governor and the Legislature.

NOTES:

The committee substitute would amend Transportation Code, chapter 201 instead of creating a new statute as the original bill would have done. The substitute removed language creating the State Transportation Council and inserted language directing the Texas Transportation Commission to appoint the advisory committee. The substitute would require the members of the advisory committee to be appointed by the commission instead of by the governor as in the original bill.

The committee substitute added language that removed the requirement for the plan to include high-speed trains and for TxDOT to consult with other state agencies and local governments in developing the plan.