

- SUBJECT:** Statewide database on social service client transportation
- COMMITTEE:** Transportation — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Alexander, Siebert, Edwards, Hamric, Hawley, Hill, Uher
0 nays
2 absent — Y. Davis, Noriega
- WITNESSES:** For — None
Against — Glen Gabois, Texas Citizen Action
On — Margot Messey, Texas Department of Transportation
- BACKGROUND:** Transportation Code, chapter 455 requires the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to consider and include needs of health and human services (HHS) clients in its public transportation planning and funding activities. Chapter 459 requires social services providers that receive state or federal funding for transportation services to coordinate with local public transportation providers to the greatest extent possible.
- By October 1 of each year, TxDOT is required to deliver a list of public transportation providers to state HHS-related agencies. By November 1 of each year, the executive director of each of these agencies is to forward the list to each social services provider that contracts for client transportation services. Social services providers must give the public transportation providers an inventory of current contracts and in-house capital resources.
- DIGEST:** HB 2248 would require social services providers to report their inventories to TxDOT as well as to public transportation providers. TxDOT would have to compile a statewide database to document transportation expenses and track the number of instances in which social service contract dollars actually are awarded to a transit operator as a result of compliance with these changes.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 2248 would enhance the coordination of transportation services among public transportation providers, TxDOT, and social services clients. The lack of transportation is often a major obstacle preventing low-income and rural clients from receiving the medical, employment, and social services they need. About 14 different state agencies administer 41 different transportation programs, often using different methods of keeping data and of contracting with providers.

The database proposed by HB 2248 would allow TxDOT to determine whether public transportation entities are being used to their fullest extent, because they are often the lowest-cost providers of transportation in an area. The database also would indicate how much money is being spent locally on transportation. This is difficult to calculate because many federally funded programs narrowly target specific populations, and it is difficult to track improvements and gaps in local areas.

TxDOT, rather than an HHS agency, is the appropriate agency to handle transportation coordination and database management. TxDOT is the recognized expert in transportation services, which are not social services in themselves but can be a means of obtaining social services.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 2248 would create confusion for the public and for service providers by involving two state agencies in transportation coordination. The coordination of HHS transportation would be handled more appropriately through the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), which has an Office of Community Transportation Services charged with coordinating and planning transportation services among state agencies and programs. TxDOT may know a lot about transportation, but it does not understand the special needs of HHS clients and does not assign a high priority to their needs.

HHSC's operations in transportation coordination have been hampered by its historical lack of authority over HHS agencies, but that could change if the commission's sunset bill (HB 2641 by Gray) is enacted this session. Before being passed by the House, HB 2641 was amended to require TxDOT and HHSC to develop a memorandum of understanding that would specify the roles of the two agencies. This would make available TxDOT's expertise and resources in state coordination and could allow TxDOT to obtain access to the HHSC database if necessary.

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NOTES: The companion bill, SB 942 by Armbrister, has been referred to the Senate State Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Infrastructure.

HB 2641 by Gray, the sunset bill for HHSC, passed the House on April 19.