

- SUBJECT:** Creating one-stop border inspection stations
- COMMITTEE:** Transportation — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Alexander, Siebert, Y. Davis, Hamric, Hawley, Hill, Noriega, Uher
0 nays
1 absent — Edwards
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 27 — 30-0
- WITNESSES:** None
- BACKGROUND:** The rapid expansion of Texas-Mexico trade has placed enormous demands on Texas' transportation infrastructure, with almost 80 percent of all overland U.S. trade with Mexico passing through Texas' ports of entry. As a result, the cities of Laredo, Brownsville, and El Paso have experienced a significant increase in commercial vehicle traffic.
- DIGEST:** SB 913 would amend the Transportation Code by authorizing the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to establish and maintain one-stop border inspection stations.
- The bill would require TxDOT to choose a location for an inspection station along a major highway at or near a border crossing from Mexico in El Paso, Laredo, and Brownsville, so that all federal, state, and municipal agencies that regulate traffic across the border at each crossing could be located at one place. TxDOT could enter into agreements with these agencies and could lease office space at the inspection station to these agencies.
- TxDOT could establish these stations only if the federal agencies involved in regulating traffic at each border crossing agreed to the design of the facility at each location and agreed to use the facility if built.
- SB 913 would take effect only if the general appropriations act of the 76th Legislature provided a specific appropriation for this purpose.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally approved by a two-thirds record vote of the membership in each house.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 913 would allow TxDOT to enter into contracts with federal, state, and municipal agencies for the design and use of inspection stations at each of three major border crossings. This cooperative effort would create a consolidated, efficient use of the limited space for inspection.

The bill also would increase the efficiency of inspection and would expedite border crossings. California, which operates one-stop border inspection stations in several locations, has increased by 30 percent the identification of trucks that fail state regulations.

Officials from affected agencies could inspect a vehicle in one stop rather than tie up international commerce with successive inspections. For El Paso, Laredo, and Brownsville, which have seen border crossings soar because of the North American Free Trade Agreement, the one-stop border inspection station would reduce the time and backlogs in border crossings.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The promise of the one-stop border inspection station may be misleading. This bill would do nothing to reduce congestion on the Texas side of the border. The inspections would be directed at traffic coming from Mexico. Consolidating all inspections in one stop actually might increase the time needed for inspection and result in longer delays.

SB 913 would require TxDOT to finance the construction of new facilities. However, federal agencies conduct most inspections at the border. The bill includes no provisions seeking federal assistance to help pay for these new facilities. State highway funds should not be used to subsidize federal operations.