

- SUBJECT:** Increasing the allowable road and bridge fee for vehicle registration
- COMMITTEE:** County Affairs — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Lewis, Casteel, Chisum, Farabee, Flynn, Olivo
0 nays
3 absent — W. Smith, Farrar, Quintanilla
- WITNESSES:** For — Jim Allison, County Judges and Commissioners Association; Don Lee, Texas Conference of Urban Counties
Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** Transportation Code, sec. 502.172(a) authorizes a county to impose an additional \$10 fee on a registrant of a vehicle for the purpose of funding county roads and bridges. The county assessor-collector collects the road and bridge fee when collecting all other vehicle-registration fees.
- The required annual registration fee for a passenger car, a municipal bus, or a private bus weighing 6,000 pounds or less is:
- \$40.50 for a vehicle the model year of which is more than six years before the year in which the registration year begins;
 - \$50.50 for a vehicle the model year of which is between three and six years before the year in which the registration year begins; or
 - \$58.50 for a vehicle the model year of which is three years or less before the year in which the registration year begins.
- DIGEST:** HB 3313 would increase to \$20 the additional fee that a county could impose for vehicle registration to pay for county roads and bridges.
- The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2003.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 3313 would allow county commissioners courts to adjust their counties' road and bridge fees by a small amount to pay for a growing need to service road and bridge infrastructure that links county residents to broader networks of markets. The \$10 county assessment for roads and bridges has not been adjusted since 1990, and inflation has diminished its value. Also, county funds once available for funding road and bridge projects now are being used for criminal justice expenses. As a result, counties need more revenue to resurface their roads and to rebuild bridges.

For example, about 300 miles of roads in Nueces County require rebuilding at \$100,000 per mile (\$30 million). An additional 140 miles in the county require a county investment of \$2.8 million to repair. Adjusting the road and bridge registration fee would generate an additional \$2.2 million in revenues that the county could leverage to obtain \$15 million in new investments in order to begin restoring Nueces County roads and bridges. Other counties have similar needs, and HB 3313 would help satisfy them by authorizing counties to require the proper people — road and bridge users — to finance them.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

With Texas families' incomes stagnating, now is not the time to double the allowable road and bridge fee, which is really a tax by another name. Higher vehicle-registration fees would affect nearly every Texas family, because most counties would order the increase and most families own at least one car. Existing vehicle-registration fees already impose a significant burden on vehicle registrants.