

SUBJECT: Including toll projects in Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan

COMMITTEE: Transportation — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Krusee, Phillips, Callegari, Casteel, Deshotel, Hill

0 nays

3 absent — Flores, Hamric, West

WITNESSES: For — None

Against — None

On — Amadeo Saenz, Texas Department of Transportation

BACKGROUND: The Federal Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) requires states to develop and submit Statewide Transportation Improvement Plans (STIPs), which identify transportation projects planned for the next three years. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) collaborates with Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) throughout the state to develop Transportation Improvement Plans (TIPs), which list significant transportation projects in the MPOs' respective regions. The TEA-21 also requires that affected parties – including citizens, public agencies, and private providers of transportation – have a chance to offer input into the development of the STIP.

The STIP includes transportation projects that receive or may receive federal funds and incorporates metropolitan TIPs from around the state into one plan consistent with the state's long-range plans. The TEA-21 does not require that toll projects be listed in STIPs.

DIGEST: HB 962 would amend Transportation Code, ch. 362, which governs the construction and operation of turnpike and toll projects, by adding a requirement for TxDOT to list in the three-year STIP, along with other significant transportation projects, those projects that TxDOT considered eligible or feasible for tolling.

The bill would take effect on September 1, 2005.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

Including plans for toll projects in the STIP could aid stakeholders and interested parties in remaining informed about plans for upcoming toll projects around the state. Parties affected by the construction of toll roads or the conversion of free roads to toll roads should have access to the state's plans.

Access to information is good for the public, and a good government should be as transparent as possible. It is also important for governmental entities and citizens, including landowners, to have an opportunity for input at the earliest possible point.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 962 would require TxDOT to identify projects it considered eligible or feasible for tolling and include them in the STIP without specifically requiring public input, congestion relief studies, or economic impact statements to determine whether these projects should be included as potential toll projects.