

- SUBJECT:** Providing for a regional transit authority in the Rio Grande Valley area
- COMMITTEE:** Transportation — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 10 ayes — Morrison, Martinez, Burkett, Y. Davis, Israel, Phillips, Pickett, E. Thompson, S. Thompson, Wray
- 0 nays
- 3 absent — Goldman, Minjarez, Simmons
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ramiro Gonzalez, City of Brownsville)
- Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Vincent May, Texans for Accountable Government; Jim Baxa)
- On — Ron Garza, Lower Rio Grande Development Council; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Eric Gleason, Texas Department of Transportation)
- BACKGROUND:** Regional transit authorities (RTAs) are public political entities that operate a public transportation system. They are empowered, broadly speaking, with the authority to acquire property, make agreements and contracts, issue bonds, and charge fares of riders with criminal penalties for nonpayment.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 1986 would authorize the creation of a regional transit authority (RTA) in Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy counties. The RTA would be allowed to impose a fee on the use of an international bridge that it operates, but the bill would restrict how the funds could be used.
- The process for the creation of the RTA would start with the board of directors of the regional planning commission in the area holding public hearings. The commission then would create an interim executive committee, which would develop a service plan subject to the approval of each county's commissioners court. The committee then could order a

confirmation election on the question of creating the RTA, which would be approved by a simple majority vote.

A new RTA created under the authority in CSHB 1986 would be empowered with certain eminent domain powers. These provisions would take effect only if the bill received a two-thirds vote of the membership of each house.

This 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, 2017.

NOTES:

The bill's author plans to offer a floor amendment prohibiting a regional transit authority created under CSHB 1986 from relocating the property of a telecommunications provider without the provider's permission.

The companion bill, SB 2139 by Lucio, was left pending April 26 in the Senate Transportation Committee following a public hearing.