

SUBJECT: Allowing Rio Grande Valley counties to impose a vehicle registration fee

COMMITTEE: Transportation — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 9 ayes — Canales, Landgraf, Bernal, Y. Davis, Hefner, Krause, Leman,  
Martinez, Ortega

0 nays

4 absent — Goldman, Raney, Thierry, E. Thompson

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Karen Rove, AGC of Texas  
Highway Heavy)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Terri Hall, Texas TURF and  
Texans for Toll-Free Highways; Don Dixon; CJ Grisham; Stephanie  
Ingersoll)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jeremiah Kuntz, Texas Department  
of Motor Vehicles)

DIGEST: HB 1666 would allow the commissioners court of any county that borders  
both Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico or that borders one of those counties  
(Cameron, Willacy, Hidalgo) to impose an additional fee of \$2 for a  
vehicle registered in the county if approved by voters in the county.

The fee would be collected at the same time that other vehicle registration  
fees were collected. A vehicle that could otherwise be registered without  
the payment of a fee would be allowed to be registered without the  
additional fee associated with this bill.

A county would send 50 percent of the fee revenue collected to a regional  
planning commission, council of governments, or similar regional  
planning agency. The use of fee revenue by these organizations would be  
restricted to funding public transportation services.

A county would send the other 50 percent of the fee revenue collected to municipalities in the county, distributed in proportion to their populations. The use of fee revenue by a municipality would be restricted to funding road or drainage projects.

The Department of Motor Vehicles would be required to adopt rules necessary to administer the registration of a vehicle registered in a county that charges the fee.

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, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

HB 1666 would allow the counties of the Rio Grande Valley to secure funding needed to improve their drainage, public transportation, and roads. Last June, the area was hit with an extreme rain event that caused extensive damage. County voters have approved a \$190 million bond to pay for a drainage system upgrade, but cities and transit systems are struggling to recover. The bill would help these entities to prepare for future events.

The bill would require that any increase in fees be approved by the voters in an election, so concerns over excessive government charges are unjustified.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

HB 1666 would represent an attempt by the Legislature to impose another fee on vehicle owners. Vehicles are taxed enough already, and the additional registration fee would bring no benefit to owners.