

**SUBJECT:** Authorizing state coordination of certain broadband development projects

**COMMITTEE:** State Affairs — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 11 ayes — Phelan, Deshotel, Guerra, Harless, Holland, Hunter, P. King, Parker, Raymond, Rodriguez, Springer

0 nays

2 absent — Hernandez, Smithee

**WITNESSES:** For — Tim Morstad, AARP; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Kara Mayfield, Association of Rural Communities in Texas; Andrew Wise, Microsoft; Jeremy Fuchs, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association; Jennifer Bergland, Texas Computer Education Association; Evan Autry, Texas Electric Cooperatives; Michael Pacheco, Texas Farm Bureau; Patrick Wade, Texas Grain Sorghum Association; Sara Gonzalez, Texas Hospital Association; Dan Finch, Texas Medical Association; Ryan Skrobarczyk, Texas Nursery & Landscape Association; Daniel Gonzalez, Texas Realtors; Weldon Gray, Texas Statewide Telephone Cooperative, Inc.; Bay Scoggin, Texas Public Interest Research Group)

Against — Bob Digneo, AT&T Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Jason Winborn, AT&T; Henry Flores, CenturyLink; James Hines, Texas Association of Business; Deborah Giles, Texas Technology Consortium & Center for Technology)

On — Francisco Enriquez and Thomas Visco, Glasshouse Policy; Richard Lawson, Verizon; (*Registered, but did not testify:* JP Urban, Texas Public Utilities Commission)

**BACKGROUND:** Interested parties have noted that many rural Texans lack access to broadband Internet service, largely because the installation of infrastructure in isolated areas is costly and difficult to coordinate.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 2422 would require the Texas Department of Transportation

(TxDOT) to encourage and coordinate efforts to plan, relocate, install, or improve broadband conduit, defined as conduit, pipe, or duct for fiber optic or other cables that support broadband and wireless facilities for broadband, in highway rights-of-way in conjunction with any current or planned highway construction.

TxDOT would be required to develop a strategy to facilitate the timely and efficient deployment of broadband conduit or other broadband facilities as needed on state-owned land and in state-owned buildings.

TxDOT would have to give special consideration to projects that were likely to improve access to broadband in rural or underserved communities.

Where practicable, TxDOT would be required to provide assistance to political subdivisions in taking advantage of voluntary joint trenching opportunities.

The bill would not authorize TxDOT to require a conduit or facility in a right-of-way to be relocated at the owner's expense.

TxDOT would be required to submit to the Legislature an annual report detailing TxDOT's actions in carrying out the provisions of the bill, any gains in broadband speed or access associated with voluntary joint trenching opportunities, and any costs or cost savings to the state, private entities, or end users of broadband services associated with such opportunities.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.