

SUBJECT: Allowing certain counties to charge optional vehicle registration fee

COMMITTEE: Transportation — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 11 ayes — Canales, Landgraf, Bernal, Goldman, Hefner, Krause, Leman, Ortega, Raney, Thierry, E. Thompson

0 nays

2 absent — Y. Davis, Martinez

WITNESSES: For — Ramsey English Cantu, City of Eagle Pass

Against — Terri Hall, Texas TURF and Texans for Toll-free Highways; Don Dixon; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Stephanie Ingersoll; Terri Leo Wilson; Tanya Robertson)

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

BACKGROUND: Under Transportation Code sec. 502.402, the commissioners courts of certain counties may impose an additional vehicle registration fee of up to \$10. Revenues are sent to a regional mobility authority in the county to fund long-term transportation projects.

DIGEST: CSHB 333 would allow a county to impose an additional vehicle registration fee under Transportation Code sec. 502.402 if it was part of a regional mobility authority including at least one other county and bordered Mexico.

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: CSHB 333 would make use of an existing tool to provide a funding mechanism for a regional mobility authority in the Rio Grande Valley.

Such authorities can allow counties to finance, acquire, construct, design, and maintain long-term transportation authorities that they otherwise may not be able to afford or coordinate. The optional vehicle registration fee allowed by the bill would help the traditionally underfunded region, allowing counties in the Valley to collect a fee in the same manner as other counties.

While the Texas Department of Transportation is an efficient state agency, the Valley has been underfunded compared to other regions of the state. The area is experiencing rapid growth in both population and traffic, and has unique needs as an area on the border with busy international crossings. Long-term transportation projects such as congestion management are a necessity to prepare the region for future growth.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

CSHB 333 would be an unnecessary and burdensome addition to transportation finance systems in the Rio Grande Valley. Taxpayers should not have to pay an additional fee on car registrations for transportation projects, especially since the lands are mostly rural and do not need congestion management. Any projects should be financed by the Texas Department of Transportation, which was formed to take care of transportation needs. The agency has better experience, rules on bidding and performance, and more transparent processes than a regional mobility authority.