

SUBJECT: Authorizing Transportation Commission to establish variable speed limits

COMMITTEE: Transportation — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 11 ayes — Canales, Raney, Ashby, Davis, Gámez, Caroline Harris,
Landgraf, Lozano, Ordaz, Patterson, Perez

0 nays

2 absent — Lujan, Romero

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Anne O’Ryan, AAA Texas; Jay Crossley, Farm&City; Arturo Ballesteros, North Texas Toll Authority; Scott White, Velo Paso Bicycle-Pedestrian Coalition; Vanessa Sinclair; Callum Sinclair)

Against — Terri Hall, Texas TURF, Texans for Toll-free Highways; Rick Briscoe (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ruth York, Tea Party Patriots of Eastland County; Texas Family Defense Committee; Gregory Porter)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Lance Simmons, Texas Department of Transportation)

BACKGROUND: Some have suggested that variable speed limits that lower the speed limit when potentially hazardous road conditions are present could improve traffic safety.

DIGEST: HB 1885 would authorize the Transportation Commission to establish a variable speed limit program to allow the temporary lowering of a prima facie speed limit to address inclement weather, congestion, construction, or other conditions that affected safe and orderly traffic movement on a road for which the commission had the authority to establish a speed limit.

A speed limit established under the program:

- would be based on an engineering and traffic investigation;

- could be effective for all or a portion of the highway for any period of day or night;
- could not be less than 10 mile per hour below the existing prima facie speed limit on the road; and
- would be effective only when posted and only if a sign notifying drivers of the change was posted between 500 and 1000 feet before the speed limit began.

Notice of the speed limit could be displayed using a changeable message sign.

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, 2023.