

SUBJECT: Authorizing route designations for oversize and overweight cargo traffic

COMMITTEE: Transportation — committee substitute recommended

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

0 nays

2 absent — Ashby, Landgraf

WITNESSES: For — Walker Smith, Port of Harlingen Authority; Steven Putegnat, Titan Marine Fuel LLC (*Registered, but did not testify*; Don Rodman, Alliance for I-69 Texas; Chris Fisher, Port of Beaumont; Victor Martinez Jr, Port of Palacios/Texas Ports Association; Josh Leftwich, Texas Aggregate and Concrete Association; Fred Shannon, Texas Association of Manufacturers)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Tom Glass; Fran Rhodes)

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

DIGEST: CSHB 1888 would require the transportation commission to designate the most direct route from the Free Trade International Bridge to the western Cameron County line using Farm-to-Market Road 509 and U.S. Highway 281. The designation would be for the purpose of a permit issued by a port authority in a county bordering Mexico for the movement of oversize or overweight vehicles carrying cargo on a state highway.

The bill also would authorize the commission to designate another route in consultation with the port authority, either of which would require the consent of the port authority.

The bill would allow the commission to authorize a regional mobility authority to issue permits for the movement of oversize or overweight

vehicles carrying cargo in Hidalgo county on U.S. Highway 281 between the Pharr-Reynosa International Bridge and the eastern Hidalgo County line. Permit authorization for U.S. Highway 281 between the Pharr-Reynosa bridge and Spur 29 would be repealed.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2023.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 1888 would make cargo traffic across the Texas-Mexico border safer and more efficient by authorizing the designation of new routes between the border and the Port of Harlingen for oversize trucks. The currently designated route between the port and the Free Trade International Bridge at Los Indios has become unsafe due to criminal activity on the Mexican side of the bridge, leading oversize trucks to travel to and from the Pharr International Bridge instead. However, not all of this alternate route is part of a designated overweight corridor, so drivers risk being stopped and fined. CSHB 1888 would help these drivers travel between the border and the port as safely and directly as possible, minimizing the risk of dangerous incidents and ensuring that valuable commerce moving through the Port of Harlingen was not impeded.

**CRITICS  
SAY:**

No concerns identified.