

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 544
By: Hancock
Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In 1984, the State of Texas established a funding formula to fund school district transportation costs and was funding roughly 70-80 percent of districts' costs. Since then, the funding formula has not changed and has resulted in drastically lower percentages for open-enrollment schools.

S.B. 544 amends the Education Code to allow open-enrollment school districts to apply for an allotment to help cover the costs of operating and maintaining the transportation system for school choice eligible students.

As proposed, S.B. 544 amends current law relating to the transportation allotments provided under the Foundation School Program to school districts that permit students to select a campus of attendance.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 42.155(b), Education Code, by amending Subdivision (3) to redefine "linear density" and adding Subdivision (4) to define "school choice eligible student."

SECTION 2. Amends Section 42.155, Education Code, by adding Subsection (c-1) and amending Subsection (d), as follows:

(c-1) Provides that this subsection applies only to a district that offers students residing in the district a variety of school choices in selecting a campus for attendance and provides transportation to the selected campus at no cost to the students. Requires that the choices of campus offered represent multiple factors, such as the sex of students enrolled at the campus, the subject matter or learning methods emphasized at the campus, and the degree to which athletic and other extracurricular activities are available at the campus. Entitles a district, in addition to the regular transportation allotment under Subsection (c) (relating to the eligibility for and calculation of a transportation allotment for school districts or counties), to an allotment based on the daily cost per school choice eligible student of operating and maintaining the transportation system for school choice eligible students and the linear density of that system. Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) to give consideration to factors affecting the actual cost of providing those transportation services in the district. Provides that the average actual cost is to be computed by the commissioner and included for consideration by the legislature in the General Appropriations Act. Prohibits the allotment per mile of approved route from exceeding the amount set by the appropriation.

(d) Authorizes a district or county to apply for and on approval of the commissioner receive an additional amount of up to 10 percent of its regular transportation allotment under Subsection (c) to be used for the transportation of children living within two miles of the school they attend who would be subject to hazardous traffic conditions if they walked to school.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2013.