

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
87R6722 JXC-D

S.B. 633
By: Blanco
Transportation
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Begun in 1932 and finished in 1947, the Davis Mountains State Park Highway loops from Fort Davis, passes The University of Texas's historic McDonald Observatory, and connects to many recreation areas. The modern 75-mile highway follows the same route, winding through the Davis Mountains above the Chihuahuan Desert. Today the loop consists of State Highway 166 and a portion of State Highway 118. The loop connects to Davis Mountains State Park, the rustic Indian Lodge, and the Fort Davis National Historic Site as well as other parks, scenic drives, and historic sites.

What is left of the original Davis Mountains State Park Highway is an incredibly beautiful scenic route that is an essential economic driver for Fort Davis and the surrounding area. With a population of only 2,342 in 2010, Jeff Davis County is one of the 25 least populous counties in Texas. With limited resources, it is difficult for the county to properly market the Davis Mountains Scenic Loop Highway. The designation of this historic stretch of highway as the Davis Mountains Scenic Loop Highway and as a Texas historic route would ensure that the highway loop continues to bring tourism to the Fort Davis area.

S.B. 633 would require the Texas Historical Commission (THC) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to designate and market the Davis Mountains Scenic Loop Highway. S.B. 633 would also allow THC and TxDOT to seek federal funds to supplement any other revenue available. It would not require expenses related to markers if funding is not located.

As proposed, S.B. 633 amends current law relating to the designation of State Highways 118 and 166 as the Davis Mountains Scenic Loop Highway and a historic highway.

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 Subchapter A, Chapter 442, Government Code, by adding Section 442.033, as follows:

Sec. 442.033. STATE HIGHWAYS 118 AND 166 AS DAVIS MOUNTAINS SCENIC LOOP HIGHWAY. (a) Requires the Texas Historical Commission (THC) to cooperate with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to designate, interpret, and market as the Davis Mountains Scenic Loop Highway and a Texas historic highway the route formed by State Highway 166 and the portion of State Highway 118 between Fort Davis and its intersection with State Highway 166.

(b) Authorizes THC and TxDOT to pursue federal funds dedicated to highway enhancement to supplement revenue available for the purposes under Subsection (a).

(c) Prohibits a designation of the route described by Subsection (a) as the Davis Mountains Scenic Loop Highway and a Texas historic highway from being construed as a designation under 54 U.S.C. Section 300101 et seq.

(d) Provides that TxDOT is not required to design, construct, or erect a marker under this section unless a grant or donation of funds is made to TxDOT to cover the cost of the design, construction, and erection of the marker. Requires that money received to cover the cost of the marker be deposited to the credit of the state highway fund.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2021.