

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.R. 2
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Transportation & Homeland Security
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The United States Congress established the Surface Transportation Enhancement Program (program) in 1991 to enhance the driving experience, improve aesthetics of local roadways, affect the quality of the environment in every region, and contribute to the livelihood of Texas communities. However, the Texas Transportation Commission (commission) has indefinitely suspended the program and is currently advocating changes to it at the federal level.

These efforts by the commission to influence the United States Congress and other states for changes in federal law relating to the program imply that the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) opposes it, despite the program's popularity and TxDOT's 15-year administration of it.

As the agency charged with administering the program in Texas, TxDOT has a responsibility to ensure that the money appropriated by Congress for scenic beautification, pedestrian and bicycle trails, and historic preservation is delivered to the cities and counties that depend on these funds. But rather than trim funding in all program categories, the commission has chosen to suspend the program and the evaluation of the 332 applications submitted for program funding in response to a reduction in federal transportation funds allocated to Texas.

The commission advocates the removal of the federal provision that requires a portion of federal transportation funds allocated to each state to be available only for transportation enhancement activities.

As proposed, S.R. 2 expresses the will of the Texas Senate to the commission that it cease efforts in other states and on the federal level to change the program and continue to use the program for beautification purposes and historical projects.

RESOLVED

Texas is known for its beauty and history, and Texans have traditionally prioritized the creation of scenic roads and trails and the preservation of the history of our great state to enhance the quality of life and strengthen the Texas economy; for the above reasons, the Senate hereby requests the commission to cease efforts to influence Congress and other states for changes in federal law relating to the program, and the secretary of the senate is to forward an official copy of this resolution to the Texas Office of State-Federal Relations and to the chairman of the commission.