

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2642
By: Kent
Culture, Recreation & Tourism
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Texas' historic roads and highways are vital cultural resources, but these routes are being lost and forgotten in Texas' contemporary landscape. Texas lacks a coherent program to designate historic roads and highways and has no program to promote them as corridors for heritage tourism. The Texas Historical Commission manages heritage tourism programs through the heritage trails program, which was created in 1968 to encourage local tourism in Texas. The state's 10 heritage trails are not necessarily historic routes, but rather driving loops set up to connect points of historic or scenic interest in 10 designated heritage trail regions across Texas. There are also several historic routes in Texas that have been designated independent of the heritage trails program, including the Chisolm Trail and the Old San Antonio Road. Currently, there is no clear method for incorporating these routes into the existing regional framework, or for designating or introducing other historic roads to the system.

The introduced version of this bill amended the Transportation Code. Though historic roads are the focus, this bill is about tourism, and under Texas law heritage tourism programs fall under the jurisdiction of the Texas Historical Commission. Furthermore, the commission already has the staff in place to administer a tourism-oriented historic highways program, while the Texas Department of Transportation has historically focused on engineering and logistics. Bearing these considerations in mind, it seems logical to transfer the bill's provisions to the Government Code, and make the commission the primary agency entrusted with the program. The establishment of this program presents an opportunity to increase heritage tourism in Texas and for the commission to overlay historic roads and highways on the existing regional heritage trail map, and ensure that these routes, many of which have played key roles in Texas' historic and modern development, are not lost.

C.S.H.B. 2642 requires the Texas Historical Commission to cooperate with the Texas Department of Transportation to establish a program for the identification, designation, interpretation, and marketing of Texas historic roads and highways.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2642 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Historical Commission to cooperate with the Texas Department of Transportation to establish a program for the identification, designation, interpretation, and marketing of Texas historic roads and highways. The bill authorizes the commission and the department to pursue federal funds dedicated to highway enhancement for the program to supplement revenue available for the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2009.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

C.S.H.B. 2642 amends the Government Code rather than the Transportation Code as in the original.

C.S.H.B. 2642 differs from the original by requiring the Texas Historical Commission to cooperate with the Texas Department of Transportation to establish the historic roads and highways program, whereas the original requires the department to cooperate with the commission to establish the program.