

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1184
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Transportation
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Regional mobility authorities (RMAs) were created during the 77th Legislature, Regular Session, 2001. RMAs are political subdivisions formed by one or more counties to finance, acquire, design, construct, operate, maintain, expand or extend transportation projects. These projects may be tolled or non-tolled. At the time of their creation, it was envisioned that RMAs would provide more local control and investment in projects of significance to the region encompassed by an RMA.

There are nine RMAs in Texas: Alamo RMA, Cameron County RMA, Camino Real RMA, Central Texas RMA, Grayson County RMA, North East RMA, Hidalgo County RMA, Sulphur River RMA, and Webb County-City of Laredo RMA. Each year, the Texas Transportation Commission requires the nine RMAs to submit a compliance report and a project report. The current audits that are compiled on RMAs are brief, undetailed, and do not provide transparency to Texas taxpayers.

RMAs have power and authority over regional transportation plans, and as a political subdivision of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), there is no clear oversight of them. S.B. 1184 requires that each RMA be fully and completely audited by the State Auditor's Office (SAO). The reports must be submitted no later than November 1, 2016.

Requiring SAO to develop an audit plan and general objectives of the audit consistent with generally accepted auditing standards will give Texans and lawmakers a full understanding of how much money has been allocated to each RMA and how the funds have been used by the nine RMAs. TxDOT, as well as Texans, should have a clear picture of how RMA spends the funding they receive from taxpayer dollars. If there is waste, fraud, or abuse in the RMA system, SAO will find it. If not, the state audit can still be used to realize greater efficiency.

As proposed, S.B. 1184 amends current law relating to an audit of regional mobility authorities conducted by the state auditor.

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. (a) Defines "regional mobility authority" in this section.

(b) Requires the state auditor to conduct an audit of each regional mobility authority. Requires the state auditor, in conducting the audit, to develop an audit plan and establish the scope and objectives of the audit consistent with generally accepted auditing standards and with other audits conducted by the state auditor under Chapter 321 (State Auditor), Government Code.

(c) Requires that the audit conducted under Subsection (b) of this section determine, for each regional mobility authority, the amount of:

- (1) money received from this state in total and for each biennium;
- (2) money spent on each transportation project or system of the authority; and
- (3) bonds issued.

(d) Provides that, while conducting the audit under this section, the state auditor:

(1) may require the assistance of an official or employee of a regional mobility authority, the comptroller of public accounts of the State of Texas, or any other state agency; and

(2) is entitled to access all of the books, accounts, reports, vouchers, or other records of information of any regional mobility authority or state agency, including access to all electronic data.

(e) Requires the state auditor to prepare a report of the audit conducted under this section. Requires the state auditor, not later than November 1, 2016, to file the report with the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the presiding officer of each standing committee of the senate and house of representatives having primary jurisdiction over transportation.

SECTION 2. Provides that this Act expires September 1, 2017.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2015.