

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 273
By: Canales
Homeland Security & Public Safety
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

It has been suggested that a digital identification program has the potential to offer greater convenience and security to issuers and holders of Texas driver's licenses and personal identification certificates. H.B. 273 seeks to establish a pilot program for the issuance of digital identification to gauge these potential benefits.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Department of Public Safety in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 273 amends the Transportation Code to require the Department of Public Safety (DPS) by rule to establish a pilot program for the issuance of digital driver's licenses and digital personal identification certificates. The bill requires DPS to adopt the initial rules for the pilot program not later than February 1, 2022, and, in establishing the pilot program, to do the following:

- assess existing DPS infrastructure and identify changes required to implement the pilot program;
- upgrade the infrastructure according to those findings;
- acquire a mobile application that meets certain requirements for security and usability and displays digital identification that includes the same general information as is on a driver's license, other than a signature;
- deploy the application at no cost to focus groups for testing and evaluation; and
- implement a law enforcement version of the application for field testing.

H.B. 273 authorizes DPS to contract with a third party to establish the pilot program if the contract is at no cost to DPS and prohibits digital identification issued under the pilot program from being used or accepted as valid proof of identification.

H.B. 273 requires DPS to prepare a report containing the results of the pilot program and DPS recommendations and to submit that report to the Public Safety Commission and the legislature not later than the 180th day after the date of the pilot program's completion. The bill's provisions expire September 1, 2023.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.