

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 4499  
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Culture, Recreation & Tourism  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

It has been reported that although Texas ranks among the top states in flora and fauna diversity, the state is failing to meet the demand for outdoor engagement. For example, a past study found that an additional 1.4 million acres of parkland were needed in the Houston-DFW-San Antonio population triangle to meet local recreational needs, which was more than twice the amount that existed statewide at the time of the study. The disparity between parklands and population has only widened since.

Opportunities exist to strategically connect state, local, and federal parklands with cooperation from private landowners to offer expanded hiking, biking, and horseback riding opportunities for Texans, which could play an important role in encouraging Texans to get outside and enjoy health benefits such as reduced blood pressure, lowered risk of cardiovascular disease, and mental health improvement. Coordination and planning from a state agency can be a critical asset in helping to actualize this connectivity through a regional connected trails system. C.S.H.B. 4499 seeks to address this issue by requiring the Parks and Wildlife Department to conduct a study on establishing a regional connected trails system throughout Texas to provide recreational opportunities for Texans and highlight the state's scenery, wildlife, and history.

### **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 this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 4499 requires the Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) to conduct a study on establishing a regional connected trails system throughout Texas to provide recreational opportunities for Texans and highlight the state's scenery, wildlife, and history. The study must evaluate and may develop recommendations regarding the following:

- the feasibility of establishing such a system;
- proposed locations of regional connected trails;
- strategies for integrating existing trails into the system;
- the capacity of TPWD to oversee the system;
- the proposed allocation of state resources to fund the system; and
- alternative proposals to increase, connect, and protect outdoor recreational trails.

C.S.H.B. 4499 requires TPWD to consult with the following entities in conducting the study:

- Texas Department of Transportation;

- Texas Historical Commission;
- federal land management agencies; and
- counties and municipalities who maintain parks with relevant trails.

C.S.H.B. 4499 requires TPWD, not later than December 1, 2022, to submit to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the chair of each committee of the legislature that has primary jurisdiction over TPWD a written report that summarizes the study's findings and any recommendations.

C.S.H.B. 4499 does not apply to trails used for motorized vehicles and expires February 1, 2023.

#### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

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

#### **COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE**

While C.S.H.B. 4499 differs from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways to conform to certain bill drafting conventions, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute differs from the original by clarifying various details of the scope of the study and recommendations.

The original required delivery of the report to the legislature, whereas the substitute requires delivery to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the chair of each committee of the legislature that has primary jurisdiction over TPWD.

The substitute changes the original's expiration date of September 1, 2023, to February 1, 2023.

The substitute changes the original's effective date of September 1, 2021, to on passage or September 1, 2021, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote for immediate effect.