

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.C.R. 32
By: Hughes
Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs
4/15/2021
As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Northeast Texas Trail (NETT) is a 130-mile-long converted rail corridor, stretching from Farmersville through 19 rural towns and 7 counties to New Boston. Since 2012, the Northeast Texas Trail Coalition has advocated for turning this previously unused land into a comprehensive system of parks, paths, and protected natural areas; under the group's vision, the NETT will be the longest pedestrian, bicycle, and equestrian trail in Texas, and it will link population centers, public facilities, and neighborhoods across the region.

The construction of the NETT is expected to help revitalize the communities along the trail's route, many of which are severely disadvantaged. According to a 2014 economic impact assessment, the project is a low-cost investment that will create jobs, increase tourism, conserve valuable land, and bolster property values; furthermore, studies show that when citizens have access to safe and well-maintained outdoor spaces that can be used for recreation, relaxation, and exercise, their overall quality of life is improved. The development of the NETT is likely to have a positive impact on the health, welfare, and economic prosperity of the region's rural communities, and the possibility of making it a part of the Texas Parks and Wildlife system should be explored.

RESOLVED

That the 87th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby request the lieutenant governor and the speaker of the house of representatives to direct the appropriate house and senate committees to conduct an interim study regarding the feasibility of integrating the NETT into the state park system.

That the studies identify next steps in planning and changes required in state statutes, agency administrative rules, and local ordinances, and that the committees consider in their studies management and governance issues and coordination, as well as the initial and ongoing resources needed to fully incorporate the NETT into the state park system.

That the committees submit full reports, including findings and recommendations, to the 88th Legislature no later than December 31, 2022.