

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 1222
By: Metcalf
Transportation
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Concerns have been raised regarding Texas laws that require two license plates to be displayed on a passenger car or light truck. C.S.H.B. 1222 proposes a study to be conducted by the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Public Safety on the feasibility, cost, and effect on law enforcement of authorizing a passenger car or light truck to be operated with only a rear license plate and windshield sticker instead of a front and rear license plate. The bill also requires a report on the results of the study to be sent to the legislature.

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. 1222 requires the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) and the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to jointly conduct a study on the feasibility, cost, and effect on law enforcement of authorizing a passenger car or light truck to be operated with a rear license plate and a windshield sticker instead of a front and rear license plate. The bill requires the study to evaluate a license plate and windshield sticker system under which:

- TxDMV would issue a set of two license plates to an applicant for registration of a passenger car or light truck and adopt rules to do the following:
 - authorize a passenger car or light truck to display only a rear license plate if the motor vehicle is not equipped by the manufacturer with an exterior front feature to which a license plate may be fastened without drilling through the exterior of the vehicle;
 - require a vehicle that displays only a rear license plate in that manner to display a windshield sticker;
 - prescribe the manner and form of an application for a windshield sticker;
 - establish a reasonable fee for a windshield sticker;
 - determine the information and documentation required to demonstrate eligibility for a windshield sticker; and
 - prescribe the form of the windshield sticker and the manner in which the sticker must be displayed;
- a person commits a Class C misdemeanor offense if the person operates a passenger car or light truck that displays a windshield sticker and only a rear license plate under the following conditions:
 - the unmounted license plate issued for the vehicle is not in the vehicle; or

- the person fails to produce for inspection, on a peace officer's request, the unmounted license plate issued for the vehicle;
- a peace officer may not stop a passenger car or light truck that displays a windshield sticker and only a rear license plate solely to enforce the requirements that the unmounted license plate issued for the vehicle be in the vehicle and produced at the officer's request; and
- a person commits an offense if the person operates on a public highway, during a registration period, a vehicle that does not display all license plates and any windshield sticker required to be displayed on the vehicle.

C.S.H.B. 1222 requires TxDMV and DPS, not later than October 1, 2024, to jointly submit to the legislature a report of the results of the study. The bill's provisions expire September 1, 2025.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.

COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 1222 may differ from the introduced in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

Whereas the introduced required the TxDMV board's rules regarding the placement of motor vehicle license plates to authorize a passenger car or light truck to display only a rear plate if the vehicle is not equipped by the manufacturer with an exterior front feature to which a plate may be fastened without drilling through the vehicle's exterior, the substitute requires instead TxDMV and DPS to jointly conduct a study that evaluates a license plate and windshield sticker system under which TxDMV would issue a set of two plates to an applicant for registration of a passenger car or light truck and would adopt rules that authorize such a rear plate display in that same manner. Accordingly, the substitute omits the following provisions that were in the introduced:

- a provision that conditions the requirement for an applicant for vehicle registration of a passenger car or light truck to be issued a set of license plates on TxDMV being required to issue a set of two plates to the applicant;
- a provision making the offense for operating a motor vehicle without two license plates on a public highway during a registration period applicable instead with regard to the display on any vehicle of all license plates required by applicable state law or rules adopted thereunder; and
- a repealer conforming to that offense provision and a procedural provision relating to that offense provision.

The substitute includes the following provisions absent from the introduced:

- provisions setting out the criteria of the license plate and windshield sticker system that the study must evaluate;
- a requirement for TxDMV and DPS to jointly submit to the legislature a report of the study's results; and
- a provision setting the bill's provisions to expire September 1, 2025.