

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 2144
By: Parker
Transportation
5/2/2023
Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

With an average population growth of approximately 1,000 new Texans every single day, our state is facing ever-increasing challenges to meeting our citizens' transportation needs. Advanced air mobility (AAM) technology is a new, innovative mode of transportation that aims to streamline and modernize the future of mobility for passengers and cargo by relying on under-utilized aerial transit routes. While several private industry stakeholders have taken different approaches to AAM technology, most aim to develop highly automated eVTOL (electric vertical take-off and landing) aircraft with the aim of eventually unveiling autonomous, unmanned eVTOLs.

Texas is expected to be an early test location for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as soon as 2025, as well as a growing hub for AAM commercial operations and investment. As a highly advanced and emerging technological industry, private sector development and coordination with state and local governments is essential to public safety. Last session, S.B. 763 (87R) established the Urban Air Mobility Advisory Committee, which assessed necessary changes to state law to facilitate the development of urban air mobility.

S.B. 2144 reactivates last session's advisory committee and renames it the Advanced Air Mobility Advisory Committee to better suit the technology's applicability in both urban, suburban, and rural areas of the state. The bill also tasks the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) with developing a statewide plan to assess critical infrastructure and provide resources and assistance on the use of AAM technology and infrastructure to interested parties. S.B. 2144 also tasks TxDOT, the Texas Education Agency, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board with collaborating with stakeholders on AAM educational opportunities.

(Original Author's/Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

S.B. 2144 amends current law relating to advanced air mobility technology.

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. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 21, Transportation Code, by adding Section 21.0045, as follows:

Sec. 21.0045. ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE. (a) Defines "advanced air mobility."

(b) Requires the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) to appoint an advisory committee to assess current state law and any potential changes to state law that are needed to facilitate the implementation of advanced air mobility technology in this state.

(c) Requires TTC appoint to the advisory committee members to represent:

- (1) diverse geographic regions of the state;
- (2) state and local law enforcement;
- (3) the advanced air mobility industry;
- (4) transportation experts;
- (5) commercial airport representatives;
- (6) vertical takeoff and landing operators and vertiport operators;
- (7) local governments; and
- (8) the general public.

(d) Requires the advisory committee to:

- (1) hold public hearings in locations across the state or via electronic means; and
- (2) receive comments through an Internet website, by mail, and by other methods, if appropriate.

(e) Requires the advisory committee, not later than November 1, 2024, to submit to TTC and the legislature a written report that includes the advisory committee's findings and recommendations on any changes to state law that are needed to facilitate the implementation of advanced air mobility technology in this state.

(f) Provides that the advisory committee is abolished and this section expires January 1, 2025.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 21, Transportation Code, by adding Section 21.072, as follows:

Sec. 21.072. ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY. (a) Defines "advanced air mobility."

(b) Requires the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to:

- (1) review existing state aviation standards and guidelines, airport facility planning, and compatibility guidance to ensure that the standards, guidelines, planning, and guidance are applicable to advanced air mobility;
- (2) support the development of federal and industry standards for advanced air mobility technology that prioritize safety as the technology develops;
- (3) designate a TxDOT employee as a liaison to the Federal Aviation Administration for purposes of Subdivision (2);
- (4) develop a statewide plan, or an update to the Texas Airport System Plan, that specifies potential locations for and classifications of vertiports and other associated infrastructure to guide the future operational environment of advanced air mobility; and
- (5) provide resources and assistance on the use of advanced air mobility technology and infrastructure to local governments, regional councils of government, transportation planning organizations, the advanced air

mobility industry, and other entities for the purpose of identifying governmental methods to integrate industry innovation and community vision and help promote advanced air mobility technology.

(c) Requires TxDOT, the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), and the Texas State Technical College System (TSTCS) to jointly collaborate with school districts, institutions of higher education, and interested public and private stakeholders on educational opportunities related to advanced air mobility technology.

SECTION 3. Requires TxDOT, TEA, THECB, and TSTCS to implement Section 21.072, Transportation Code, as added by this Act, only if the legislature appropriates money specifically for that purpose. Provides that TxDOT, TEA, THECB, and TSTCS, if the legislature does not appropriate money specifically for that purpose, are authorized to, but are not required to, implement Section 21.072, Transportation Code, using other appropriations available for that purpose.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2023.