

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 3000
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Finance
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

An ambulance desert is defined as an area where residents are more than 25 minutes away from an ambulance station, significantly increasing the risk of delayed emergency care. A national study titled Geographic Disparities in the Provision of Ambulance Services, released in May 2023, found that 94.9 percent of Texas counties contain an ambulance desert. Additionally, Texas ranks third highest in the number of people living in these underserved areas, highlighting a critical gap in emergency medical services (EMS).

Many rural counties in Texas struggle to maintain EMS operations due to high costs, workforce shortages, and limited funding for equipment and services. With aging ambulances, long response times, and vast distances between emergency calls and medical facilities, these challenges directly impact patient outcomes. Without sustainable EMS funding, rural communities face delays in receiving critical care.

A survey conducted by the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas, which included 81 responding counties, highlights the severity of EMS response delays:

- 55 percent of counties reported average round-trip ambulance response times exceeding one hour;
- 26 percent of counties had round trips exceeding three hours; and
- 63 percent of counties stated that their nearest trauma center is located 30 or more miles away from their ambulance stations.

To improve access to emergency medical care, H.B. 3000 establishes a grant program administered by the Comptroller of Public Accounts of the State of Texas. It will provide funding to qualified rural counties for the purchase of ground ambulances, ensuring that EMS providers have the resources needed to improve response times and save lives. By addressing critical infrastructure gaps, H.B. 3000 seeks to strengthen emergency medical services in rural Texas.

H.B. 3000 amends current law relating to a grant program to provide financial assistance to qualified ambulance service providers in certain rural counties.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Comptroller of Public Accounts of the State of Texas in SECTION 1 (Section 130.914, Local Government Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter Z, Chapter 130, Local Government Code, by adding Section 130.914, as follows:

Sec. 130.914. RURAL AMBULANCE SERVICE GRANT PROGRAM. (a) Defines "grant program," "qualified county," and "qualified rural ambulance service provider."

(b) Requires the Comptroller of Public Accounts of the State of Texas (comptroller) to establish and administer the rural ambulance service grant

program (grant; program) to support the state purpose of ensuring adequate ground ambulance services by providing financial assistance to qualified rural ambulance service providers in qualified counties.

(c) Authorizes a county, not later than the 30th day after the first day of a qualified county's fiscal year, to submit a grant application to the comptroller. Provides that a county is authorized to submit only one application each fiscal year. Provides that, if a county is awarded a grant under this program, the county is ineligible to apply for an additional grant.

(d) Provides that the comptroller is authorized to award a grant to a qualified county using money appropriated to the comptroller for that purpose and only in accordance with a contract between the comptroller and the county that includes conditions providing the comptroller with sufficient control to ensure the public purpose of providing adequate ground ambulance services is accomplished. Requires the comptroller, in awarding grants, to consider the distance from a qualified county's county seat to the nearest Level I trauma facility and the county's ability to otherwise obtain the money necessary to provide adequate ground ambulance services.

(e) Provides that the comptroller is authorized to award a grant under this section only in certain applicable amounts.

(f) Provides that a qualified county awarded a grant under this section is authorized to use or authorize the use of the grant money only to purchase ambulances as provided by comptroller rule.

(g) Prohibits a qualified county awarded a grant under this section from reducing the budget of the qualified rural ambulance service provider for the county's next fiscal year following the fiscal year of the grant award.

(h) Authorizes the comptroller to disburse a grant award to a qualified county before the county places an order for an ambulance. Requires the county to purchase and take possession of an ambulance with money awarded under the grant program not later than the fifth anniversary of the date the county receives the money. Requires the comptroller to adopt rules necessary to implement this section, including rules to establish certain processes, deadlines, procedures and restrictions.

SECTION 2. Authorizes a qualified county, as defined by Section 130.914(a)(2) (relating to defining "qualified county"), Local Government Code, as added by this Act, to apply for a grant on or after January 1, 2026.

SECTION 3. Requires the comptroller, not later than January 1, 2026, to establish and administer the program and adopt the rules necessary to implement the program as required by Section 130.914, Local Government Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2025.