

- SUBJECT:** Agreements to expedite environmental review of transportation projects
- COMMITTEE:** Transportation — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Pickett, Callegari, Y. Davis, Guillen, Harper-Brown, T. Smith, W. Smith
- 0 nays
- 4 absent — Phillips, Dunnam, McClendon, Merritt
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 2 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar
- WITNESSES:** None
- BACKGROUND:** Transportation Code, ch. 222 outlines funding and federal aid provisions for the state highway system. Transportation Code, ch. 366 establishes Regional Tollway Authorities and assigns them powers related to the acquisition, design, financing, construction, operation, and maintenance of regional toll road projects. Transportation Code, ch. 370 establishes Regional Mobility Authorities and assigns them powers related to constructing, maintaining, and operating regional transportation projects.
- DIGEST:** SB 502 would allow Regional Tollway Authorities and Regional Mobility Authorities to enter agreements to provide funding to state and federal agencies to expedite the environmental review process for transportation projects. Eligible projects would include:
- TxDOT projects;
 - projects that were part of the metropolitan planning organization’s long range transportation plan;
 - county projects;
 - regional tollway authority projects; and
 - regional mobility authority projects.

Agreements could specify priority projects and would have to require the agency receiving money to complete an environmental review in less time

than usual. TxDOT could enter into a separate agreement for a transportation project of regional importance.

Agreements between authorities and agencies to expedite environmental reviews would not change the right of the public to review and comment on transportation projects. Parties in the agreements would have to publish the agreement on their websites.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2009.