

- SUBJECT:** Funding and operating TxDOT travel and information centers
- COMMITTEE:** Transportation — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 10 ayes — Phillips, Martinez, Burkett, Fletcher, Guerra, Harper-Brown, Lavender, McClendon, Pickett, Riddle
- 0 nays — None
- 1 absent — Y. Davis
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 18 — 31-0 on the Local and Uncontested Calendar
- WITNESSES:** (*On companion bill, HB 3423*)
For — None
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* John Barton, TxDOT; Meredith Melecki, Legislative Budget Board; Margo Richards, TxDOT)
- BACKGROUND:** Local Government Code, ch. 391 governs regional planning commissions, whose purpose is to encourage and permit local governmental units to join and cooperate to improve the health, safety, and general welfare of their residents and plan for future development of communities and regions.
- Transportation Code, sec. 204.009 allows the Texas Department of Transportation to sell promotional items, such as calendars, books, prints, caps, light clothing, or other items approved by the commission that advertise the resources of the state. Proceeds from the sale of the items are deposited to the credit of the state highway fund for the department's use in its travel and information operations.
- DIGEST:** SB 1017 would allow the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to contract with a local government or regional planning commission to operate a travel information center in the local government's boundaries. TxDOT could issue a request for proposals to private or nonprofit entities for the operation of a travel information center.

TxDOT could sell commercial advertising space at a travel information center if the advertising was not visible from the main highway. It would sell the advertising at a level about sufficient to cover the cost of its travel and information operations, so long as those activities did not decrease the amount of available federal highway funding.

SB 1017 would allow TxDOT to enter into an agreement for the acknowledgment of donations so long as the acknowledgment did not contain descriptions of the donor's products or other company information. Any proceeds from advertising or acknowledgments would be deposited into an account dedicated to the operation of TxDOT's travel and information operations.

This 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, 2013.

NOTES:

The House companion bill, HB 3423 was left pending in the Transportation Committee on April 16.