

SUBJECT: Revising statute governing the port access account fund

COMMITTEE: Transportation — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 11 ayes — Canales, Raney, Ashby, Davis, Gámez, Caroline Harris, Lozano, Lujan, Ordaz, Perez, Romero

0 nays

2 absent — Landgraf, Patterson

WITNESSES: For — Chris Fisher, Port of Beaumont and Texas Ports Association; Victor Martinez Jr, Port of Palacios/Texas Ports Association (*Registered, but did not testify*; Steven Albright, AGC of Texas; Greg Macksood, Calhoun Port Authority; Julie Williams, Chevron; Karen Rove, City of McAllen, Texas; Karen Rove, City of Pharr, Texas; Michael Vargas, Pharr International Bridge / City of Pharr; Gavin Massingill, Port Freeport; Kerrick Henny, Port Houston; Mario A. Martinez, Port of Brownsville; Brian Yarbrough, Port of Corpus Christi Authority; Keith Strama, Sabine Neches Navigation District; Robert Nathan, Schneider Electric; Rebecca Grande, Texas Association of Business; Glenna Bruun, Texas Ports Association; Dennis Kearns, Texas Railroad Association; Dana Moore, Texas Trucking Association)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Lance Simmons, Marc Williams, Texas Department of Transportation; Shawn Hall Lecuona, The Voice of Justice and of Consanguinity)

BACKGROUND: Some have suggested that statute governing the port access fund should be clarified to facilitate investments that will help meet increasing demand and maintain the state’s leadership in maritime trade.

DIGEST: CSHB 2605 would add money appropriated by the Legislature and money received from the federal government to the money to be credited to the

port access account fund. Money appropriated by the Legislature could only be used to fund eligible port development and infrastructure projects.

The bill would replace references to “port access improvement projects” with “port connectivity projects” and replace references to “port security, transportation, or facility projects” with “port development and infrastructure projects.”

An applicant eligible to receive funding for a port development and infrastructure project could not receive more than 20 percent of the total amount appropriated to the Texas Department of Transportation for such projects.

The bill would extend eligibility for port access account funding to the acquisition of mechanized equipment used to move cargo or passengers in commerce and trade generally, rather than in international commerce only.

The bill would specify that fund expenditures would be subject to approval by the Port Authority Advisory Committee.

CSHB 2605 would take effect September 1, 2023.