

**SUBJECT:** Requiring a study on border security and transportation infrastructure

**COMMITTEE:** Transportation — committee substitute recommended

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

0 nays

2 absent — Ashby, Landgraf

**WITNESSES:** For — Pete Sepulveda, Jr., Cameron County Regional Mobility Authority; Jerry Maldonado, Laredo Motor Carriers Association (*Registered, but did not testify*; Steven Albright, Associated General Contractors of Texas-Highway Heavy Utility and Industrial Branch; Guadalupe Cuellar, City of El Paso; Elisa M. Tamayo, El Paso County; Karen Rove, Parsons; Mark Borskey, Texas Trucking Association; Brian O'Reilly, Webb County-City of Laredo Regional Mobility Authority; David Mills)

Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Roberto Lopez, Texas Civil Rights Project)

On — Steve McCraw, Texas Department of Public Safety (*Registered, but did not testify*: Brandye Hendrickson, TxDOT)

**DIGEST:** CSHB 4422 would require the Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to conduct a study on public safety, border security, and transportation infrastructure at or near Texas-Mexico border crossings.

TxDOT would be required to conduct the study in consultation with:

- the Department of Public Safety;
- the Texas Military Department;
- the Texas A&M Transportation Institute;
- local law enforcement agencies near the border;

- transportation industry representatives; and
- an independent nonprofit research organization.

The study would be based on selected Texas-Mexico border crossings that serve commercial vehicles. As part of the study, TxDOT would be required to analyze current routes onto the state highway system for commercial vehicles from the selected border crossings and identify ways to:

- strengthen and support border security efforts, including Operation Lone Star;
- support law enforcement efforts to maximize border crossing oversight, vehicle inspections, and use of public safety resources;
- enhance transportation infrastructure and road technology near the border to maximize safety and improve transportation efficiency and connectivity; and
- reduce traffic congestion while addressing safety concerns.

The study also would have to consider possible future transportation routes that would improve efficiency, enhance public safety, mitigate congestion, and streamline commercial vehicle connectivity.

The study would assess current technologies used in commercial inspections near border crossings and identify upgrades or alternatives that could improve security.

In the study, TxDOT would be required to identify funding strategies and determine the amount of state money needed to improve transportation efficiency and commercial vehicle connectivity at border crossings.

By December 1, 2024, the department would be required to submit a written report on the study's findings to the governor, lieutenant governor, and the Legislature.

CSHB 4422 would expire January 1, 2025. 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, 2023.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 4422 would equip the state with the information and analysis needed to improve border security and ensure the smooth flow of commerce through crossings at the Texas-Mexico border. Updating and enhancing transportation technology and infrastructure at and near commercial border crossings would enhance security by reducing the likelihood of illegal trafficking of drugs, weapons, or people. In order to strengthen border security and commerce, it is necessary to first study the most effective tools and technologies available for transportation infrastructure and connectivity; CSHB 4422 would achieve this first step.

**CRITICS  
SAY:**

While improving infrastructure technology, reducing congestion, and preventing dangerous drug trafficking at ports of entry is a desirable goal, the study required by CSHB 4422 would focus too much on security through law enforcement without including the perspectives of humanitarian organizations doing important work in and around ports of entry. The bill would require the study to find ways to strengthen and support Operation Lone Star, which has been harmful to many migrants and people of color. Resources directed to support Operation Lone Star would be better used to enhance humanitarian efforts at the border.