

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.C.R. 25
By: Lucio
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As Filed

DIGEST

The current presidential administration has indicated that it will allow Mexican trucks at least partial access to U.S. highways beyond the commercial border zone that was established in 1993 to limit the movement of Mexican trucks until certain basic infrastructure and safety concerns has been addressed. The opening of the Texas border to Mexican trucks will impact three border transportation districts in Pharr, Laredo, and El Paso without proportionate increase in the commitment of money by the federal government.

The Texas Senate Special Committee on Border Affairs (committee) was given several study charges during the 1999-2000 interim, including assessing the long-term intermodal transportation need of the Texas-Mexico border region, evaluating the planning and capacity resources of the three Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) border districts. The committee reported that the Texas border crossings account for approximately 80 percent of United States-Mexico truck traffic, but the state is only awarded 15 percent of the federal funds allocated for trade corridors. Recent estimates by TxDOT indicate that even though Texas is the second largest state in the nation, the state currently receives only 49 cents on the dollar in federal highway discretionary program funds.

The border points of entry are the primary gateway for commerce in Texas and the nation but have become an economic point of congestion as a result of the staggering volume of traffic they must handle. In July 1999, the General Accounting Office (GAO) reported that NAFTA-related traffic along the border region has taxed the local and regional transportation infrastructure and that the resulting lines of traffic are associated with air pollution caused by idling vehicles. The GAO also cited federal and local officials' concerns about congestion affecting safety around ports of entry and noted that congestion can have a negative impact on businesses that operate on a just-in-time schedule and rely on regular cross-border shipments of parts, supplies, and finished products.

The committee reported that in the last decade total northbound truck crossings, from Mexico into Texas, increased 215.8 percent, vehicle crossings increased by 18.5 percent, southbound truck crossings, from Texas to Mexico, increased by 278.1 percent, vehicle crossings by 53.9 percent, and pedestrian crossings by 30.8 percent. According to some estimates, heavy truck traffic is expected to increase by 85 percent during the next three decades and severely degrade existing roads and bridges.

The Texas Department of Economic Development (TDED) reported that Mexico is Texas' largest export destination and has been a chief contributor to the state's export growth. TDED has concluded that Texas accounts for 20.8 percent of the total U.S. exports to the North American market, largely because of high export levels to Mexico. In recent years, Mexico has become the nation's second largest market, and Texas' ties to Mexico are the primary contributors to the state's high share of overall U.S. exports.

The comptroller of public accounts of the State of Texas has reported that exports account for 14 percent of our gross state product and in 1999 \$100 billion in two-way truck trade passed through the Texas-Mexico border. NAFTA activity has tripled on the border and trade with Mexico accounts for one in every five jobs in Texas.

PURPOSE

As proposed, S.C.R. 25 submits the following resolutions:

Provides that the 77th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby respectfully urge the Congress of the United States and the president of the United States to recognize the unique planning, capacity, and infrastructure needs of Texas' border ports of entry and the high-priority transportation corridors, and the impact of this federal policy that will further open the border areas to Mexican truck travel by earmarking \$3 billion to fund the construction of one-stop federal and state inspection facilities that are open 24 hours per day along the Texas border region, as well as to fund infrastructure improvements and construction projects at border points of entry.

Provides that the Texas Legislature urge the congress to rectify the funding imbalance that Texas has experienced from the federal government, and that congress and the president also increase the percentage in federal discretionary money that Texas has received by earmarking \$4 billion for critical NAFTA-related planning, capacity, and right-of-way acquisition needs and \$3 billion for certain immediate needs for rural roadways that are impacted by NAFTA-related traffic. Provides that the Texas Legislature urge congress and the president to earmark \$1 billion for law enforcement needed to prepare for the influx of Mexican trucks with access to travel throughout the border and beyond.

Provides that the Texas secretary of state forward official copies of this resolution to the president of the United States, to the speaker of the house of representatives and the president of the senate of the United States Congress, and to all the members of the Texas delegation to the congress with the request that this resolution be officially entered into the Congressional Record as a memorial to the Congress of the United States of America.