

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.S.B. 436
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Transportation & Homeland Security
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Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Under current law, hybrid vehicles are not authorized to access high occupancy vehicle lanes regardless of occupancy and are not authorized to have free access to toll roads.

As an incentive to encourage drivers to purchase fuel-efficient vehicles, Virginia, Utah, Georgia, Florida, and Arizona have authorized hybrid vehicles to use high occupancy vehicle lanes without having multiple occupants. Other initiatives in Oregon and Colorado offer tax credits for the purchase of hybrid vehicles and the cities of New Haven, Connecticut and Baltimore, Maryland have offered free or reduced parking for hybrid vehicles. According to the United States Department of Energy, a hybrid vehicle could save as much as \$4,336 in gasoline costs over a period of five years over a vehicle that gets a gas mileage of 25 miles per gallon. For vehicles with a gas mileage of 20 miles per gallon, the savings could amount to \$6,234 over a five-year period of time. Furthermore, hybrid vehicles have the ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by as much as one-third.

C.S.S.B. 436 provides an incentive to purchase and operate fuel-efficient vehicles by authorizing hybrid vehicles to display an insignia that would authorize the vehicle access to high occupancy vehicle lanes regardless of the number of occupants in the vehicle unless certain conditions apply.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 224.153, Transportation Code, by adding Subsection (e), to authorize a motor vehicle that displays the "hybrid vehicle" insignia authorized by Section 502.1861 in an easily readable location of the back of the vehicle to use a high occupancy vehicle lane regardless of the number of occupants in the vehicle unless the use would impair the receipt of federal funds or the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) determines that the high occupancy vehicle lane has reached 80 percent of its vehicle capacity.

SECTION 2 Amends Subchapter D, Chapter 502, Transportation Code, by adding Section 502.1861, as follows:

Sec. 502.1861. "HYBRID VEHICLE" INSIGNIA FOR CERTAIN MOTOR VEHICLES. Requires TxDOT, at the time of registration or reregistration of the motor vehicle, to issue a specially designed "hybrid vehicle" insignia for a motor vehicle that draws propulsion energy from both gasoline or conventional diesel fuel and from a rechargeable energy storage system. Requires TxDOT to issue a "hybrid vehicle" insignia under this section to persons who meet certain criteria without the payment of any additional fee.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2007.