

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 161
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Transportation & Homeland Security
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The 78th Legislature, Regular Session, 2005, passed legislation authorizing the Texas Department of Transportation to issue the specialty license plates "God Bless Texas" and "God Bless America." The legislation required that the funds collected from the sale of these license plates be deposited into the State Highway Fund (Fund 6) and be used only for the Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS). This program seeks to reduce congestion around schools, reduces injuries, increases physical activity, imparts traffic safety knowledge, and helps to promote and educate communities about safe routes to school.

By reallocating these specialty funds, the state may be able to leverage additional federal funding. The federal matching funds will ensure the expansion of this highly regarded program to other areas of Texas and ensure a greater investment into non-infrastructure SRTS efforts, including dedicating more funding for education, encouragement, evaluation, and public awareness, with the potential of impacting the nationally recognized health and obesity crisis facing children.

As proposed, S.B. 161 requires that the proceeds from two specialty plates be deposited to the credit of the share the road account in the state treasury for use by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to support SRTS. S.B. 161 authorizes TEA to utilize these funds to secure funds available under federal matching programs for SRTS and obesity prevention.

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 504.648, Transportation Code, by amending Subsection (b) and adding Subsections (d) and (e), as follows:

(b) Requires that, after deduction of the Texas Department of Transportation's administrative costs, the remainder of the fee be deposited to the credit of the share the road account in the state treasury and authorizes that it only be used by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to support the Safe Routes to School Program of a designated statewide nonprofit organization whose primary purpose is to promote bicyclist safety, education, and access through education and awareness programs and training, workshops, educational materials, and media events. Deletes existing text requiring that the remainder of the fee for issuance of the license plates is to be deposited to the credit of the state highway fund. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

(d) Authorizes up to 25 percent of the amount in Subsection (b) to be used to support the activities of the nonprofit organization in marketing and promoting the Safe Routes to School Program and the God Bless Texas and God Bless America license plates.

(e) Authorizes TEA to use money received under this section to secure funds available under federal matching programs for safe routes to school and obesity prevention.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.