

- SUBJECT:** Granting federal funding priority to evacuation routes
- COMMITTEE:** Transportation — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — Krusee, Phillips, Harper-Brown, Deshotel, Haggerty, Harless, Hill, Macias, Murphy
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — Mayor David Southern, City of Granbury (*Registered, but did not testify*: Leonard Heathington, Hood County Commissioner Precinct 3; Dr. Richard L. Roan, Hood County Commissioners Court)
- Against — None
- On — Amadeo Saenz, Texas Department of Transportation
- BACKGROUND:** Transportation Code, sec. 222.034 specifies how the Texas Transportation Commission (TTC) distributes federal transportation money. It requires the agency to fund highway projects across the state in a manner consistent with federal formulas that determine the amount of federal aid the state receives for transportation projects. TTC can vary from this procedure if it issues an order or ruling explaining its justification.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 3275 would amend Transportation Code, sec. 222.034 to require TTC to give funding priority to highway projects enhancing federally designated emergency evacuation routes.
- 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, 2007.
- SUPPORTERS SAY:** Federal and state law require the establishment of evacuation routes for natural and man-made disasters, and CSHB 3275 would ensure those routes in Texas receive the priority they deserve in ensuring all residents are able to get out of harm's way. The bill would not require or seek additional federal or state money; all it would do is authorize that evacuation routes receive priority status when federal money is spent.

The concern that inspired this bill focuses on an evacuation route in Hood County near the Comanche Peak nuclear power plant. The current evacuation route for students at a nearby school requires them to travel toward the plant, which could be in the direction of the disaster in the event of a nuclear incident or terrorist attack on the plant. TxDOT has proposed building a bridge that would create an evacuation route away from the plant at a cost of \$30 million. Enactment of this bill would improve the area's chances of obtaining funding, if available, to move forward with this project and create a safer evacuation route for area children.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

This bill would not have any real effect because it is written too broadly and refers to federally designated emergency evacuation routes, which do not exist. The Governor's Division of Emergency Management designates evacuation routes, but they are not included in any state or federal statute nor are there plans to do so. Additionally, the state already has designated many of these projects as priorities; TxDOT has identified \$176.3 million needed for improvements along these routes. This bill would not change current procedures because it does not task the agency to make evacuation projects a top priority, nor does it dictate a timeframe or provide for rules to administer such a program.