

SUBJECT: Increasing the population cap for subregional transportation authorities

COMMITTEE: Transportation — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 11 ayes — Pickett, Martinez, Burkett, Y. Davis, Fletcher, Harless, Israel, Murr, Paddie, Phillips, Simmons

0 nays

1 absent — McClendon

WITNESSES: For — Kelly Allen Gray and Denis McElroy, City Of Fort Worth; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jerry Valdez, City of Richland Hills, TX; Matthew Geske, Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce; Mark Mendez, Tarrant County Commissioners Court; Vic Suhm, Tarrant Regional Transportation Coalition)

Against — None

On — Nancy Amos, Fort Worth Transportation Authority; (*Registered, but did not testify*: John Barton and Marc Williams, Texas Department of Transportation)

BACKGROUND: Transportation Code, ch. 452, subch. N specifies the board membership and appointment process for transportation authorities in subregions that contain no city with a population greater than 800,000. Transportation Code, ch. 452, subch. O specifies the board membership and contains additional provisions for transportation authorities in subregions that include a principal city that has a population greater than 800,000.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the the population of Fort Worth in 2013 was about 793,000. The Fort Worth Transportation Authority is organized under Transportation Code, ch. 452, subch. N, which applies to subregions containing no city larger than 800,000 people. At its current rate of growth, Fort Worth may soon exceed that cap, if it has not already.

DIGEST:

CSHB 3777 would change the description of subregional transportation authorities under ch. 452, subch. N to specify that such an authority would have no municipality with a population of more than 1.1 million, instead of 800,000 as in current law. The bill would specify in references to these transportation authorities elsewhere in the Transportation Code that the 1.1 million population figure was based on the most recent decennial census. It also would make conforming changes in Tax Code, ch. 321 to reflect this new threshold.

In addition, the bill would expand the membership of the board of a subregion governed by subch. N from nine to 11 members. The principal municipality's governing body would appoint one of the new seats, and the county commissioners court would appoint the other, unless the principal municipality was not entirely located within one county. In that case, the county commissioners court would appoint both of the new seats.

The bill would change the population threshold for subregional transportation authorities under ch. 452, subch. O — those with a principal city with a population of 800,000 or more — to specify that the city would have a population of 1.1 million or more.

CSHB 3777 also would add provisions related to a municipality withdrawing from a subregional transportation authority, including the determination of the financial obligation of a withdrawn city to an authority.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2015.