

Support SB 941 by Buckingham / HB 1908 by E. Morales *Creating a State Scenic Byway Program*

Texas is the ONLY state in the nation that does not have a Scenic Byway Program.

House Bill 1908:

- Creates a State Scenic Byway Program under TxDOT which would allow for local communities to apply for and receive federal grants if qualified; and
- Designates 30 already statutorily protected roadways from the construction of new billboards. These roadways will automatically qualify to be a part of the state scenic byway program, if passed.

The purpose of this legislation is to (1) **increase tourism** along Texas roadways; and (2) **preserve** the state's most scenically, culturally, or historically **significant roadways and adjacent communities**.

To qualify for federal funding, communities along designated scenic byways must exhibit one of more of six core intrinsic qualities — *scenic, natural, historic, recreational, archaeological, or cultural* — contributing towards a unique travel experience; and may not erect a new billboard along these roadways.

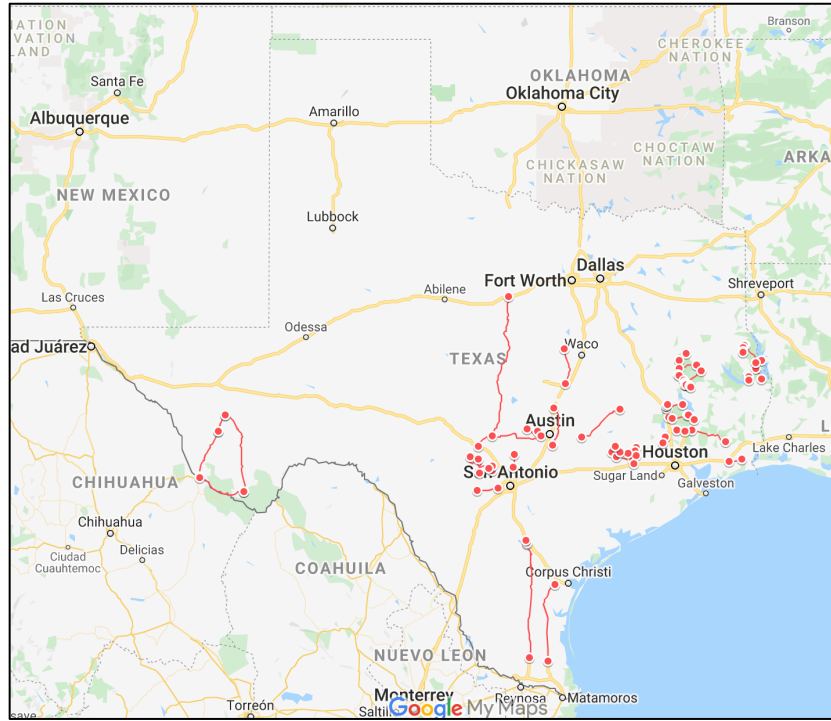
Key points to consider:

- This bill **does not** create any new stretches of roadways that cannot have billboards.
- Designating a stretch of road as a 'Scenic Byway' **does not create a burden for the local communities**. Designation as a 'Scenic Byway' is just that, a designation. The pursuit of federal funding as a Scenic Byway must be a community-led effort, requiring local buy-in and would do so by applying through TxDOT.

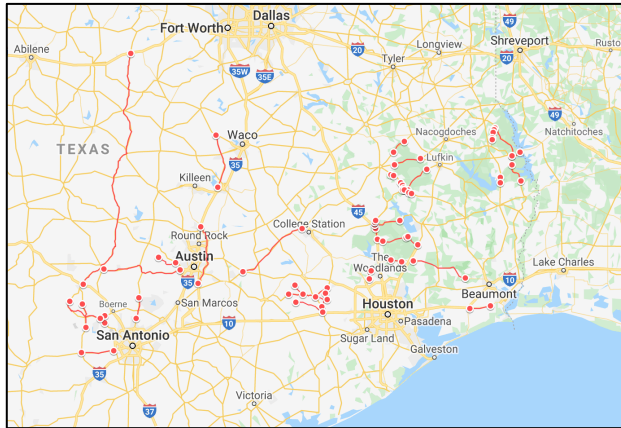
Some of the most common uses of scenic byway funds are used for tourism purposes like a welcome center or beautification efforts.

Scenic Byways bring significant economic benefit to local communities and are a critical part of America's travel and tourism industry, which generated \$2.9 trillion in economic impact in 2019, according to the U.S. Travel Association. For example, the Blue Ridge Parkway generated **\$1.4 billion** in economic output and supported **16,300 jobs** in North Carolina and Virginia in 2019, according to the National Park Service. During the same year, the Natchez Trace Scenic Parkway brought **\$13.1 million** in economic output to Alabama, Tennessee, and Mississippi, supporting **161 jobs**.

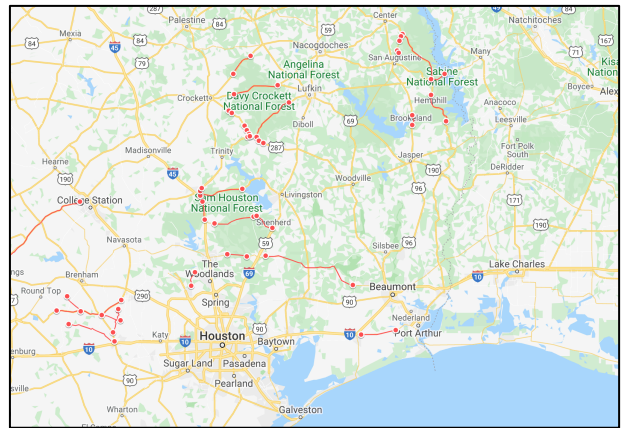
Existing Protected Highways



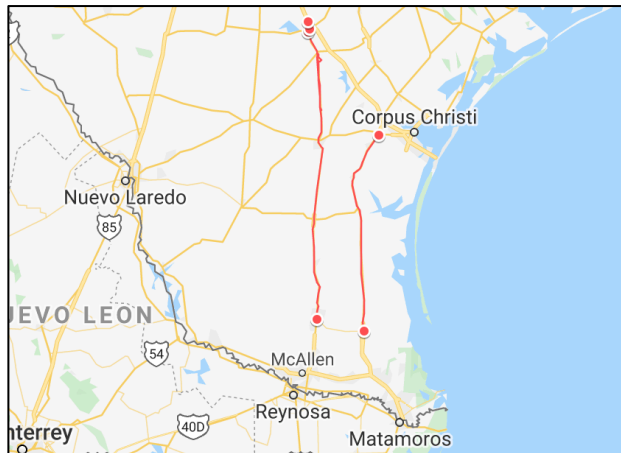
Central Texas



East Texas



South Texas



West Texas

