

Perry Vetoes Interagency Smart Growth Work Group

This week, Governor Rick Perry vetoed Senate Bill 2169 by Senator Rodney Ellis, which would have established a work group of state agencies that would meet regularly to discuss how to develop the state in a smart, sustainable way.

The group would have been comprised of all major state agencies involved in directing economic development and planning policies in the state, including the Texas Department of Transportation, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, the Texas Department of State Health Services, and the Texas Water Development Board. It would have set up a space for these agencies to actually *talk to each other* about planning policy.

According to Senator Ellis, who expressed great disappointment at the veto, SB 2169 would have created a work group so that these agencies “could work proactively on plans to mitigate sprawl and the resultant traffic congestion... Smart growth is a viable solution to many of our problems and the Governor missed an opportunity to grow the state’s economy in an environmentally friendly way when he vetoed the bill.”

Representative Carol Alvarado, the House sponsor for SB 2169, also expressed disappointment at Perry’s veto.

One of the most frustrating parts of this veto saga is that Senator Ellis and Representative Alvarado amended the bill at the request of the Governor to address his concerns about legislative intent and creating more bureaucracy. His office said after the bill was amended that they were satisfied with the changes. His veto then can only be viewed as retaliation for Senator Ellis’ thoughtful and intelligent comments on the merits of taking action on climate change and his disappointment in the Governor’s stance on moving Texas to the negotiating table to discuss Federal climate change legislation.

There seems to be no other explanation for why Perry would veto a bill with no fiscal impact that would encourage state agencies to talk to each other about how to develop the state sustainably.