Let Cars Do the Watching — Without Tracking Anyone

Puts Texas emergency alerts into connected cars, so vehicles can spot the vehicle an alert is looking for — with no plate database, ever.

90TH LEGISLATURE • PROPOSAL
Adds Government Code Chapter 411, new subchapter
Status: draft — ready for an author

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
Empower people before they become victims • Protect and expand victims' rights

CHAMPION SOUGHT
Author / co-author / endorser / testifier / adviser — whichever role your group can take

THE ASK We ask victims' advocacy organisations to **champion, endorse, testify for, or advise on** this bill — and members of the 90th Legislature to consider authoring it. No organisation is a supporter until it commits.

1 — THE PROBLEM VICTIMS FACE TODAY

Texas alerts — AMBER, Silver, CLEAR, and Blue — work only if someone spots the named vehicle, fast. That system was built on human eyes: highway signs carry the alert, and drivers watch for the car. In 2017 Cayley Mandadi's killer drove past dozens of those signs, and no alert could be issued for her at all — fourteen months too old for AMBER, decades too young for Silver. Her mother closed that gap with the C.L.E.A.R. Alert. As cars do more of the driving, people stop watching the road — and nothing replaces those eyes.

2 — WHAT THIS BILL DOES

- **Phased in over 18 months.** No such feed exists today — CLEAR still runs on signs — so DPS adopts the rules by **June 1, 2028**, and its duty to publish a secure, digitally signed feed of active AMBER, Silver, CLEAR, and Blue alerts begins **March 1, 2029**; DPS may launch earlier, alert by alert. DPS leads rulemaking (consulting TxDOT); specifications, matching, and certification are set by rule.
- **The vehicle does the matching, and people stay in charge.** An occupied vehicle tells its occupants, who decide whether to report; an unoccupied vehicle reports automatically. A vehicle named in an alert, if occupied, makes no report about itself at all.
- **Deliberately does not create a database** (see safeguards). Enrolment is voluntary and its timing unknown; no compliance is measured against an unpublished feed. A severable backstop could later require only new model generations to take part — never cars already on the road — with a shall-grant exemption of up to five years. Joining early earns immunity and compliance credit.

3 — HOW IT HELPS VICTIMS

BEFORE	AFTER
An alert depends on a driver reading a sign, remembering the vehicle, and happening to see it — a network thinning every year.	Participating cars compare plates around them against active alerts only. A sighting reaches DPS in minutes, while the vehicle can still be found.

> *"Let the cars do the watching too, under rules that protect every Texan's privacy while they do it."*
>
> — Lawrence Baitland, father of Cayley Mandadi, murdered October 29, 2017

4 — BALANCE & SAFEGUARDS

This is the opposite of a plate-reader database. Matching happens on the vehicle, in memory, against active alerts only. A plate that does not match exactly — a partial plate is a non-match — is never collected, stored, or transmitted, and no other list may be loaded. A report contains only the matched plate, an image, time, location, direction, and the reporting vehicle's ID. A match is a tip, not probable cause. Breaking the data rules brings a civil penalty, inadmissible evidence, and loss of the feed. These protections sit in the statute itself — agency rules carry the mechanics only and may not expand or dilute them.

5 — HOW HARD WILL THIS BE TO PASS?

●●●●○ **High**

The first programme of its kind, with no state precedent — and privacy and industry opposition in the same hearing. The chamber map has also changed: House and governorship have changed parties; the Senate stays Republican (19–12). Likely stall point: privacy and preemption in committee. Fallback: the voluntary feed is the permanent base; the backstop is severable.

6 — RISKS & MITIGATIONS

RISK / OBJECTION	MITIGATION IN THE BILL OR MESSAGE
"Surveillance creep" — scanning cars become a tracking system	Creep needs a store to creep from. This bill forbids that store: no retention, no database, no second list. Expanding it takes new legislation, in the open.
Industry opposition; federal preemption	The permanent programme is voluntary — the state publishes a feed and conditions access to it. The only duty is the severable backstop, new generations only, with a shall-grant five-year exemption.
False matches, including cloned plates	Exact matches only. A report is a tip to verify, never probable cause; no vehicle pursues or stops another.

7 — WHO IS LIKELY WITH US — AND AGAINST US

POTENTIAL ALLIES

Texas Crime Victims United — survivor-run; CLEAR-type rescue bills are its home territory. Status: to approach.

Texas Council on Family Violence — CLEAR cases are often intimate-partner abductions. Ask: endorse.

Texas Center for the Missing — runs Houston's regional alert systems. Ask: advise.

LIKELY OPPONENTS

EFF / ACLU of Texas — plate readers as mass surveillance.

Alliance for Automotive Innovation / some makers — national standards, not a state patchwork.

Incumbent plate-reader vendors — the no-retention model as precedent.

Best counter: there is no database — by design, not by promise.

8 — POTENTIAL AUTHORS FROM BILL SCORING

CANDIDATE	SCORE*	WHY THEY FIT
Sen. Tan Parker — Senate, SD 12	**67.5**	Chairs Senate Transportation in the 90th, if he holds the gavel.
Sen. Robert Nichols — Senate, SD 3	**57.75**	Authored the automated-vehicle framework this bill builds on.
Sen. Joan Huffman — Senate, SD 17	**71**	Co-sponsored the C.L.E.A.R. Alert bill itself. Fit as co-author.

* Score = the advocates' prior bill-scoring rating (89th Legislature backtest). Privacy-side co-authors: Rep. John Bucy and Rep. Brian Harrison. Re-verify rosters in January; results unofficial until the canvass.

COST
Small — DPS building and running the feed. No subsidies; the incentives are legal, not cash.

EVIDENCE IT CAN WORK
Texas law already directs DPS to recruit private help to spread alerts (Gov't Code §411.464); feeds already reach dashboards and apps.

NEXT STEP
A 20-minute briefing, then a yes or no on championing. Contact: Lawrence Baitland.