

Committee on Commerce and Tourism

CS/CS/CS/HB 1209 — Rural Development

by Commerce Committee; Ways and Means Committee; Regulatory Reform and Economic Development Subcommittee; and Rep. Shoaf and others (CS/CS/SB 1482 by Fiscal Policy Committee; Appropriations Committee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development; and Senator Simon)

The bill specifies that an agency agreement that provides state or federal financial assistance to local government entities within a rural area of opportunity (RAO) must allow the agency to provide for the payment of invoices to the county, municipality, or RAO for verified and eligible performance that has been completed in accordance with the terms and conditions in the agreement.

The bill amends the Rural Infrastructure Fund to:

- Increase the maximum grant award from 50 percent to 75 percent of the total infrastructure cost, or up to 100 percent of the total infrastructure project cost for a project that is located in a rural community that is also located in a fiscally constrained county or in a RAO;
- Remove the requirement that projects must be linked to specific job-creation or job-retention opportunities;
- Remove the currently permitted use of funds for improving access, availability, and improvement of broadband Internet service.
- Increase the maximum grant for infrastructure feasibility studies, design and engineering activities, or other infrastructure planning and preparation activities to \$300,000 for all projects and remove the limitation that the grant not exceed 30 percent of the total project cost; and
- Remove the 33 percent local match requirement for grants for surveys, feasibility studies, and the preclearance review of land for projects in a RAO.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2023.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 115-0