

March 13, 1980

LB 361

into Nebraska Public Transportation Funds. Unfortunately the fund is not complete. Original language enacting that fund was sponsored in this case by at that time Senator Bereuter said that rural systems would be funded first and that off the top then all the monies that go into this fund will go immediately to the satisfaction completely of the rural needs and this has been done. Ever since the fund has been passed it has fully funded those demands of rural transportation systems. The systems which have gone without full funding are Lincoln and Omaha. In fairness to the body I should say that this money then can probably be expected to fund Lincoln and Omaha transportation systems in the same mechanism that the fund is now satisfying the needs of that long, long list of essentially rural public transportation systems that I just enumerated. Now let me say I have had contact with those parts of the road lobby that say gas tax money can go for only one thing and that is the maintenance of highways. Well, in fact that is not so. Existing language already indicates that there are other purposes for which gas tax monies are included, the State Recreation Road Fund, the Grade Crossing Protection Fund and other such exceptions. But let me say that in this time of energy conservation, a bus that is full of forty-five riders or sixty riders or twelve riders in a rural county is saving gas tax money down the line. It is a trade off to the long term advantage of keeping drivers off the roads and utilizing roads more equitably increasing the life of the road, increasing that amount of time that we can make the capital expenditure for a road and have that last before we need to make repairs. There certainly is a relationship between public transportation and street quality and that is what the language is designed to do, to make it explicit to assist public transportation in two very vital trade offs, number one, energy conservation, and number two, the maintenance of streets and roads by increasing their longevity through more efficient utilization of transportation systems. The idea is simple. It represents the confrontation of the principle of gas tax monies and I would simply say that the existing principle that gas tax dollars can only be spent on roads is a shortsighted one. It is an examination of the issue only in the short term and fails to take into account, number one, the highly complex situation of energy conservation, and number two, the long term trade off as to the use of our streets and highways and their needs for repair when utilized by a transportation system that is more efficient than simply one driver in every car going down the street. I would urge the body to adopt the amendment and to pass LB 361. I am available for questions as

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