

April 1, 1982

LB 761

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Chambers would now move to amend the bill and Senator Chambers' amendment is on page 1489.

SENATOR NICHOL: Senator Chambers.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. Chairman and members of the Legislature, I will state what this amendment is designed to do, then I will tell you how it proposes to do it. It is designed to provide \$26 million so that construction can commence on the North Freeway. I had offered a number of resolutions which were rejected and my feeling about that is based on this consideration. Resolutions are not legally binding on the Legislature. The Legislature has gone on record in favor of this project so perhaps what they wanted to do was have a serious effort to really provide some funding or come to grips with the issue and not just put up a resolution which is a statement of a point of view but carries no real obligation on anybody. So what this first amendment will do is to earmark \$26 million of the current State Department of Roads budget for the North Freeway. That means that the money already appropriated for the Department of Roads would have \$26 million cut out of it or earmarked for this project. That would not require an increase in the variable gas tax. If you don't like this approach, there is an alternative which I will present to you shortly. Now on page 53 in line 27 to accomplish what I am attempting to do, you strike the period at the end of line 27 which would follow the word "program" and insert the words, "and \$26,000,000 to commence construction of the Omaha North Freeway." This would be another designation of a project which the Legislature is telling the Department of Roads it wants it to undertake. The reason that this proposal should be taken seriously is that those agencies which make decisions about roads have set this project as their number one priority. The Metropolitan Area Planning Agency, known as MAPA, which includes Omaha, Council Bluffs, and surrounding areas have set the North Freeway as its top priority. I gave you a handout to establish that so if you have any questions there is a publication by MAPA, the edition that came out February, 1982, and I think it is called What's Happening had these words, "The Board identified the North Freeway and the airport connector as the top project, priority projects in the utilization of interstate withdrawal substitute funds." Right next to that is an article from the Omaha Sun Newspapers dated November 6, 1980 and you will find these words, "At the top of that list is completion of the North Freeway and Storz Expressway according to Charles Nutter, Director of the State Department of Roads." Nutter questions whether there will even be any excess funds when these two projects