

that it's time they move ahead and...with this 20-year plan then it's time that we might as well begin funding it starting this year. I think Senator Hefner in his opening made it clear that he was supportive of the needs plan and supportive of moving ahead but, in his opinion, maybe we should phase the gas tax in. I guess that amendment...that rationale would make a little more sense if we'd have a very constant gas price that we pay at the pump here in Nebraska. Now if we'd been paying 80 cents per gallon for the last 10 years, having a 3.5-cent increase would be of magnanimous proportions. Obviously, that as such is not the case. We've had tremendous swings in our gasoline price at the pump. Just in the last two months we've had a tremendous swing in the gasoline price at the pump. This added variable gas tax we're talking about here is something that I think if this body agrees that the State of Nebraska should move ahead it, it's something that we can afford to do. And, like I said, if the fact was that gas pump price at the pump would never change, I think it'd be a lot more...Senator Hefner's argument would have much more weight, maybe we should phase it in. But given the facts of tremendous swings in gasoline prices in the last few months, not just the last few months but, you know, for my entire lifetime actually, since I remember when I was a little kid going on vacation and seeing gas wars for under 20 cents a gallon. Those times are no longer here and I think that because of that, because... because there is really no reason to really phase this in, we should all agree that we're going to move ahead with the highway needs study and fund it at the full level in the first year, and I urge the body to oppose Senator Hefner's amendment.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Senator Coordsen, please.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body. I, too, rise to oppose Senator Hefner's amendment. We talk at great length in this body over the years that I've been here on economic development and what the state can do to help the growth of all of Nebraska, and there's very little that the state can do that has more impact on the economic growth or maintaining status quo than a roads system. Senator Hefner talked about or mentioned the motor fuel taxes increases in the State of Kansas and State of Nebraska. In addition to that, should say that I think all of us know that Kansas recently passed in both houses a \$2.6 billion, 8-year, new money, road building program, \$2.6 billion. And we're talking about a difference of \$10 million here. We're talking about a road