

problem of continuing air service. I think many of us in here are aware of the need, not only to continue essential air service, but also I became aware, last summer, of an initiative that was in South Dakota, that you have a handout before you, where South Dakota initiated a study to see if they couldn't expand and enhance their intrastate air service connections. Traveling a good bit in this state and knowing of the difficulties that we have statewide with intrastate air service, I thought that perhaps this model was worth pursuing in Nebraska. As you know, the distances across the state make it very difficult for us to conduct business between Lincoln, Omaha and the rest of the state. It's difficult sometimes even to get into a city the size of Lincoln. We are fortunate to have at least one main line down what's called the river run that's supported by essential air service and, at all costs, we must support that. But there seems to be an increasing concern, across the state, in terms of our opportunities for economic development and tourism, some of the kinds of things that we were talking about earlier on the international trade bill, of needing to get people across this state so that we can, in fact, conduct business and take advantage of our opportunities. There is a definite lack of commercial air service in Nebraska, and that happens to be the case in most rural states right now. To add to that difficulty, it is not at all uncommon to fly outside of this state to get to the eastern part of the state. For instance, if I am to fly to Omaha or Lincoln from Chadron, I either drive to Scottsbluff or Rapid City, South Dakota, or else I fly from Chadron into Denver and come back in. The cost is usually prohibitive to do that. Senator Elmer can add to that with his experiences in McCook, so that's not an unusual case. It would be very good for this state, I think, if we were able to link it together with air service. I think we've missed some opportunities that I know of recently in terms of just the way people conduct business in this day and age they're unwilling to get into a vehicle and drive four, six or eight hours across the state to conduct business, to participate in our tourism offerings and so on. And so I think this would serve the state well to start this planning process. And I want to clarify at this point that really all we're doing is setting in motion a planning process to see what we can do to enhance air service in the State of Nebraska. The feasibility of that needs to be explored. In a couple of days or so, I suspect that we will be debating another resolution about the potential loss of rail service along the northern line. I have more than once heard Senator Lamb say, we may have missed the boat on that ten years