

an extremely painful experience already for people that I represent in Chadron where employment numbers are all but eliminated at this point in terms of railroad jobs. I believe there are only three left on a line that used to employ perhaps as many as over 100 people. That alone is devastating enough in terms of losses in this state, but perhaps even more serious at this point is the potential loss of service particularly to grain shippers. Senator Lamb mentioned that the wood chips that come out of South Dakota and the bentonite are a primary piece of the commodities necessary to make this a profitable line, but if you'll consider for a moment what the long-term implications of the loss of this line are to the State of Nebraska should this line ultimately be abandoned, there goes one more shipping option for grain producers, people that own those elevators up there, and the losses will virtually total in the millions in terms of them no longer having the rail service as a way to transport grain across the state. Now the other thing that makes this line unique is that most of the rail lines in the past that have been abandoned in Nebraska have been in fairly close proximity to either other rail lines or interstate highway systems. This line is different. It runs across the entire northern tier of the state, in fact, there are even people that have contacted me from across the South Dakota line that are dependent upon this line as a way to transport their grain, so this, in fact, is not a short line at all. It is a main line and to lose this line would be a loss of major railroad service in the state. A representative of C & NW has acknowledged that they are diverting the clay or bentonite traffic that has been previously shipped from communities in...it originates in Colony, Wyoming, and then comes down to Hermosa which is just south of Rapid City, goes on to Chadron, Nebraska, then goes on down through Senator Lamb's district and into Norfolk. It's not very difficult when you look at maps to look at the distances involved here and determine there isn't, in my opinion anyway, that you can say that somehow that is a shorter route to divert this traffic across the DM & E, and I do have copies of that map for you if you're interested in taking a look at it. And so we all need to be concerned about this very real threat to rail transportation in the State of Nebraska and I think we need to move aggressively as a Legislature not only to save this line, but continue the work that has begun to explore what's the future of rail transportation in general in this state? I know some of you have already lost rail transportation in your districts and you know the devastation that occurs to your local economy and to the employment when such things happen. So I