

providing this service for our constituents. Thank you.

SENATOR MORRISSEY: Thank you, Senator Dierks. Senator Coordsen.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of the body, my district is on the opposite side of the state from the rail line that is a primary issue in this bill, yet I'm one of the co-sponsors of 783, and I think for a good reason. In my district, I have a substantial amount of trackage through some prime grain growing areas that an abandonment has been filed on. I'm very interested in investigating ways to retain a rail system in Nebraska. It appears to be a growing trend nationally that branch lines, short lengths of trackage such as the one addressed here, are to be operated in the future by short line railroads. Funding is always an issue. I would suggest to the body, with the enactment of 761E, that there is...exists the possibility of some alternate methods of raising funding that for issues such as this did not exist before this session of the Legislature. I think this is a good idea, one that's worthy of consideration and I would encourage and urge you to move 783 along to Select File to allow the current negotiations that are taking place to continue in good faith. Thank you.

SENATOR MORRISSEY: Thank you, Senator Coordsen. Senator Kristensen.

SENATOR KRISTENSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Now, Senator Lamb, could I...if you don't want to answer these, if you want to give them to Senator Wickersham, that's fine, and these questions are ones that I think maybe are important for the body and just to let us know, right now the status of the bill would be to authorize the purchase of the line, would also authorize the money to put the line in better operating condition which would allow for other travel, which would allow the council or the state to enter into some agreement with a third party to come and operate the line as a short line and that would be the process of transportation of goods and materials and so on. Could you give me a quick update of where we're at, from your point of view, in terms of what sort of funding mechanisms may be used, and what the chances and possibilities are of this third party coming in, and do we have anybody in mind?

SENATOR LAMB: Yes, I'd be happy to. Senator Kristensen, there has been a lot of activity in regard to this bill, not only on