

April 8, 1991

LB 355, 783

CLERK: 30 ayes, 0 nays, Mr. President, on the motion to bracket the bill.

SPEAKER BAACK: The motion to bracket is successful. It is bracketed till May 8. We will now go to LB 783.

CLERK: Mr. President, LB 783 was a bill introduced by Senators Lamb, Wickersham, Dierks, Peterson, Morrissey, Schellpeper, Coordsen, Elmer. (Read title.) The bill was discussed last week, Mr. President. At that time, there was an amendment to the bill offered by Senator Kristensen that was adopted. I have no further amendments pending at this time, Mr. President.

SPEAKER BAACK: For discussion on the bill, Senator Wickersham.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body. There was some discussion and debate on this bill on Friday, but just briefly for the sake of those who were not able to be here, I want to recapitulate some of that and, again, advise the body what this bill is really about. The bill is an extension of an existing state law system. In 1980, the body adopted the Agricultural and Industrial Branch Line Revitalization Act. At that time, it set up a system of councils that would have been local political subdivisions that could have dealt with so-called branch line or short line problems. The problem that we are now confronting in the state is potential abandonment of the line from Norfolk to Chadron that is a much larger segment than I think was ever contemplated to be dealt with under the Branch Line Revitalization Act. The potential abandonment from Norfolk to Chadron would cover 7 counties and 27 municipalities, as you can see on the fact sheet that has been distributed to you. In addition, the potential economic impacts from the abandonment of that line are substantial, \$112 million over a 25-year period. Those financial impacts were calculated by a consultant for the Department of Roads. I do not believe they include all of the potential impacts. They certainly do not include impacts that would result from lost wages, lost property taxes, lost sales taxes, lost income taxes, for example. The Clerk noted that on Friday we did adopt an amendment to the bill. We adopted Senator Kristensen's amendment which struck Section 30 out of the bill. If you recall, Section 30 was the provision for the appropriation from the Highway Trust Fund to fund the buy out of the line from Norfolk to Chadron. We agreed with that amendment