

SENATOR CROSBY: Thank you, Senator Wehrbein. Senator Coordsen, on the Vrtiska amendment.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Thank you, Madam President, and members of the body, not to speak directly to the Vrtiska amendment but rather to the issue of funding the trails. I don't know, perhaps I would like to ask Senator Beutler a question, if I may, please.

SENATOR CROSBY: Will you respond, please.

SENATOR BEUTLER: If I can, certainly.

SENATOR COORDSEN: Senator Beutler, the question of how to raise funds for the...for the building and maintenance of trails has been with us for quite a few years. In almost all of the other activities of Game and Parks Commission, i.e., the state parks, the fishing activities, the boating activities, the hunting activities, there are what some people view as being substantial fees for permits to participate in that. Has the Natural Resources Committee ever given any thought to establishing a trail use permit that would be patterned after a park use permit?

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator, as a matter of fact, if I can get it up before you, it's sitting in the pile to be dealt with this year. It's a committee priority bill, would allow not only Game and Parks but the local NRDs to be sure that their trails are funded out of user fees primarily rather than out of any sort of property tax or General Funds. The trails people are very willing to have user fees. It's a chicken-in-the-egg thing at this moment in history because those kinds of fees cannot build trails or develop trails but they certainly can maintain trails and in many places bear the full cost of trail maintenance. And just as soon as we can get those mechanisms in place and as soon as trails are used the trail people want to start paying user fees on it. I mean, you know, they're not...

SENATOR COORDSEN: They're not anxious.

SENATOR BEUTLER: ...they're not more excited about it than anybody else but they do feel that that would be the fair thing to do and they are willing to bear that cost. They're even willing to have a bicycle sales tax but I can't get the Department of Revenue to say that that's okay. We're looking at