

oppose the cut and I want to give a little background on this because I realize not everyone is familiar. But this state aid program provides money to help local transit systems with their operating expenses. The transit systems are eligible for up to 50 percent of their operating deficit. The Department of Roads has made the policy decision, with the concurrence of the Legislature, to fully fund all requests for state aid from small transit systems, which are other than Omaha and Lincoln. And they fund the small transit systems first. The balance of state money left after fully funding the other smaller systems is then distributed to Omaha and Lincoln. And so all other transit systems, except Omaha and Lincoln, receive 100 percent of the state funds for which they are eligible. Omaha and Lincoln only receive 13 percent of the amount of state funds for which they are eligible. To be fair, it would seem to us and the Appropriations Committee concurred, that we should put as much money as we can into the program to get Omaha and Lincoln closer to 100 percent. That's the reason that we've gotten this money in here. It's true that it's not a big part of their budget. The point is that if the...actually they're entitled to much more money, Omaha and Lincoln, based on state law, than we are doing here. This is attempt to at least be somewhat fair and to allocate some money to those systems that are probably more heavily used within the intercity than other areas of the state. So it's attempting to put some balance into our budget. And again, we are trying to do several things in several areas. And it was the feeling of the committee that this is at least a reasonable effort to try to give the money to...to give that money that's due these two transit systems to...to maintain their use, to maintain their availability to the population, and to do it at a reasonable cost. And so even though it may not appear to be a large amount of money, it is significant to these two systems. Omaha's budget is about \$15 million, Lincoln is about \$5 million. And so we felt that it was important to keep this in here and at least make a sincere effort to try to keep some balance in this and give some of what they're entitled to. So I urge your opposition to this amendment.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Crosby.

SENATOR CROSBY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members, and thank you, Senator Wehrbein, for explaining the original funding. I noticed that Senator Avery's really happy to take it from Lincoln and Omaha but he very carefully left Gretna alone. But