

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
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April 20, 1999 LB 829

CLERK: Mr. President, LB 829, a bill introduced by Senator Kiel and others. (Read title.) The bill was introduced on January 20 of this year, at that time referred to the Transportation Committee for public hearing. The bill was advanced to General File. I do have committee amendments pending, Mr. President.

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Senator Kiel, you're recognized to open on the bill.

SENATOR KIEL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature. If Senator Chambers were here, I'd have him start singing "I've Been Working on the Railroad", but since he's not here, I will just go ahead and begin on what this particular bill happens to be about. LB 829 creates N-TRAC, which is the Nebraska Transit and Rail Advisory Council. The purpose of creating the Nebraska Transit and Rail Advisory Council is to begin the work on seeing whether or not there is feasibility for commuter rail transit between Omaha and Lincoln, but not limited to commuter rail between Omaha and Lincoln. The council will be tasked with studying statewide feasibility of passenger rail service across the state of Nebraska, to take a look at what the needs are of the state, but particularly take a look at where the greatest congestion is, and see whether or not we can find a way to relieve some of that congestion by providing for commuter rail. I want to talk a little bit about why I think rail transit is important for the state of Nebraska, and there are committee amendments to this bill, and then Senator Bromm will take those up, and then he and I both will be pleased to answer any questions about this particular bill. First of all, I want to indicate that what we have found is a net economic return on public expenditures for public transportation is about five to one. That comes from the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment. So what we're saying here is for every dollar that we spend on public transportation, we receive back five dollars. We know that mass transit also pays off. Part of the reason that mass transit pays off is because we share the roads with people like FedEx, or companies like FedEx and UPS, and we know that they have indicated that for every five minutes of traffic delay per day, costs them about \$40 million a year. So we know that when we are sharing the roads with trucks and other entities that are attempting to move goods and services across