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April 20, 1999 LB 829

which I will describe to you, and which I have handed out a synopsis of on your desks, significantly changes, in some respects, LB 829, although I think it keeps in place the primary focus, and that is to determine whether a project such as this, or any passenger surface transportation system on a statewide basis is feasible and workable, and that is the object of the N-TRAC Council, which is appointed through the committee amendment and which follows somewhat to a large extent Senator Kiel's original bill. There's an N-TRAC Council consisting of 11 members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by this body, which would include the Director of the Department of Roads, a Public Service Commissioner, two members of the general public with demonstrated knowledge of rail, two representatives of private railroads, one representative from Department of Economic Development, four representatives of local government. And these council members would serve until the termination of this act, which is, in the committee amendment, scheduled to be June 30th of 2003. The council, with the assistance of the Department of Roads, is obligated to complete a study not later than January 1 of 2002 on the feasibility and projected costs of constructing a passenger rail, high speed rail or passenger surface transportation system. The council N-TRAC is given an obligation, and the committee, I think, was pretty...pretty strong in inserting this requirement, to look specifically at the feasibility of other passenger surface transportation systems on a statewide basis, as well as the proposed rail system between Lincoln and Omaha. N-TRAC is to report its findings to the Legislature, as well as any suggested legislation to implement the findings. N-TRAC will do, basically, the following things--they are authorized to collect, administer, and expend funds. And it would be our hope that this council would be able to attract some federal funds, perhaps some grants or donations. We have not prepared an A bill to insert, at this point, any state monies. We would authorize N-TRAC to conduct this feasibility study, to adopt and promulgate any rules and regulations associated with that. The Department of Roads and N-TRAC are given, as I mentioned, a particular challenge or obligation to seek federal and private money to implement this act before requesting any state appropriation to fund this feasibility study. And the Department of Roads and the council may expend the federal funds received as designated by federal law. And, as I said, the act