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LB 408

lost. But think about it. I guess this is the sacred cow. I guess we don't touch it. But I don't understand the justification. Thank you for your time.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Schrock. We're discussing AM1849, offered by Senator Thompson to LB 408. Senator Baker, followed by Senator Bourne and eight others. Senator Baker.

SENATOR BAKER: Thank you, Senator Cudaback and members of the Legislature. I'm trying to calm down a little bit here from the first couple speakers. I'll try and lower the temp a little bit here, slow it down a little bit. Senator Wehrbein made some interesting points there. Roads has become much more efficient on their own, without a 10 percent cut. They have cut employees. They've cut a hundred and...it depends; I think, today, maybe 150 employees in the last...since our current director came in. They've cut those employees. They've not been replaced. If you'll refer to this handout here on the state...or, surface transportation financing, there's a graph back there that will show that drop in employees. The more interesting part of it to me shows the Highway Cash Fund balance. There's times when it's down to almost zero. It's been down to \$3 million. By the nature of the business, they let contracts; the first year is 20 percent of the contract cost figure goes out, the second year 65 percent, the third year 15 percent. That's just the rotation of contracts. They come due and they are built...or, they're let, and so on, et cetera. So they progress. These are long-term projects. So if we take \$30 million out now, we're going to lose \$150 million of potential construction this year. Another thing we need to point out in this brochure is, our needs have continued to grow. There's people saying they support this, they support that, take the money out of the Highway...in this case, Cash Fund. I've been approached by Senator Johnson. I know that Senator Wehrbein, Senator Schrock, myself, Senator Stuhr, we all have gravel state highways yet in our districts. Gravel state highways. That means no pavement on them. The bridges on my section of Highway 18 in Furnas and some of Gosper County, Senator Schrock's district, are scheduled to be bid this summer, and I think construction begin August 1, I believe, on five or six bridges in there. I'm not sure of the number. But if we