

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE  
Transcriber's Office  
FLOOR DEBATE

May 14, 2003

LB 408

take money out of the Highway Trust Fund, we're going to delay those projects. And you have to remember, the Highway Trust Fund is paid for by the users. This is not...this is a cash funded situation. You buy a gallon of fuel at the store...at the station, you pay the tax, it goes to highways. You pay the sales tax on your vehicle, it goes to the highways, the biggest part of it. Of course, as Senator Thompson has pointed out, it's split between the counties, municipalities, and the Department of Roads. So, another issue...or, fact I might point out to Senator Schrock, dealing with Game and Parks and recreation roads, there is money goes out of the Highway Trust Fund to the Recreation Road Fund. That's also funded out of this. So if you'll look at the schematic here on...inside of the tri-fold handout, the Nebraska surface transportation financing...I'm not going to go over that; it's a rather complicated formula...but you can see what funds the Highway Trust Fund, where the money goes, in percentages. And you have to realize, if you look up there at the funding, these are funded by the users. And when Senator Warner set this up, he put that word "trust" in there. And I don't know what people don't understand about the Highway Trust Fund. It is funded by users of roads. It's not a General Fund issue. If we do not continue to maintain and build roads, we're going to get further behind. We have a \$7.5 billion backlog in requests. That goes back to the interchange at Kearney that's been requested, the gravel highways, state highways, that we'd like to see paved, the expressways, and so on, et cetera. We have a lot of needs. It's not like we're caught up. So I obviously am going to stand in opposition to Senator Thompson's amendment. We cannot afford to take this money out of this fund. We'd be breaking the trust of the people who pay into it.

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR BAKER: We have to...we simply have to discipline ourselves in this case. It's not General Fund money. It's money paid by the users to a very important product in the state that helps economic development. It's especially important to us. And I guess I shouldn't say more important to us than highways are to eastern Nebraska. But we have great, long distances to travel. At night they have to be safe, and so on.