

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

May 14, 2003

LB 408

That fund was robbed. We had to come back this year because they were short, and raise the user fees. I don't think it's been right. I've seen also a lot of shifts, that we are really not making cuts, we're just shifting from one source of revenue to another, which does not really constitute a cut. And I think this is the same thing. Even though the sales tax might come from automobiles, it's still a user fee, because automobiles are the ones that use the roads. So it's a user fee, because it's either the gas tax...the variable gas tax, or the automobile sales tax. I did support the transfer of the money from the Highway Trust Fund to the amount that was generated because of the increase in the sales tax. I did not like to do that very well, but I felt it was money that was not designated for that...that they did not know that they were going to get. It was extra money, and it was appropriate. I have a little town in my district, Genoa, Nebraska, that a highway goes through their town. And they were on the five-year plan for about eight or nine years, never getting it done. And they called me and wondered why in the world, after five years...and they'd been on the five-year plan for this time...that there's not been improvements to the roads. I think it's very necessary. I think maybe the reason that our taxes for highways are higher, because we have a lot of miles of roads compared to our population. A lot of the money is spent in Omaha. And we are expanding the...we're doing some work on the interstate now because of all the traffic there. But also, outstate Nebraska has many miles of roads that's very necessary. I am a firm believer that we have to keep up, whether it's buildings, or roads, or whatever it is. If we don't keep it up to date, it's going to cost more money in the long run. And I think roads would be another one of these that would be the same thing. I don't think the roads are the same thing as many of the other programs that have grown so dramatically. If we think of Medicaid and education, many things have grown. It's why we're in the problem...in the situation we are. Our Roads Department has not grown about the same as what the cost of living increase has been. They have been very conservative. I think if they really wanted to go out and do a lot more on roads, we could raise the gas tax more, because I think there still needs to be done on our roads. And I would be very opposed to taking any of this money that I think was designated for that purpose. It's