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FLOOR DEBATE

March 19, 2004      LB 1144

CLERK: LB 1144, Mr. President, a bill by Senator Kruse. (Read title.) The bill was introduced on January 20 of this year, at that time referred to Appropriations. The bill was advanced to General File, Mr. President.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Senator Kruse, to open on LB 1144.

SENATOR KRUSE: Thank you, Mr. President and colleagues. If you want to follow along with something in print on this, page 25 in the blue book gives the figures. It's a fairly simple bill. It's not simple to devise it because it relates to Roads formulas and so on, so it's a complicated thing to produce. But what is being done here is fairly simple. At present in the support of public transportation, a half million comes out of Roads, a half a million comes out of city and county budgets, road budgets, and a half a million comes out of General Funds, the exact figures there are on page 25. We are changing that so that all of these come together out of the Cash Fund of Roads. This, in effect, will give Roads a half of million dollars that they don't have to spend on public transportation. It will give back a similar amount to the cities and counties. And it will relieve the General Fund of the half a million dollars which, of course, is of particular interest this year. But that's not the main reason that we are bringing the bill. By the way, the bill was solidly supported by the Appropriations Committee. We need to have a...develop a public policy on public transportation and we've not done that. A year ago I brought a bill that I hoped would do this and I soon found out that these three funds that I've referred to are frozen, and we really don't have a right to talk about any of them. At least that was what I was told in committee by the other people that were responding. They just don't want to tinker with these funds because it gets into some things we don't want to change, even though the amounts are very small. The purpose of this is to put it altogether in one place where the Legislature can be in charge, where the Legislature can respond to public transportation needs. Those are large needs that aren't really being met. Presently, they're being divided into rural and urban and that's really not a healthy thing; \$1 million is administered, not really evaluated by