

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

March 31, 2005 LB 273

discussion the other day, I got to thinking about really where are we going with economic development? We have any number of bills that have been supplied to us in more or less of a piecemeal manner. Well, I'm going to suggest today for our consideration...and this is not meant as a bill. It's not meant as an amendment, but I think it's very worthy of discussion, and that's this: For rural economic development, why not build a new interstate? This isn't really a new concept. Congressman Doug Bereuter and our own Senator Matt Connealy have sponsored some such legislation that we called the expressway system. Why was I-80 successful? Because it goes from point A to point B in a relatively short distance. Two, it goes along a line from point A to point B with major population centers: Omaha, Lincoln, Hastings, Grand Island, North Platte. Three, people want to go from point A to point B and from point B to point A. Furthermore, people want to go beyond point A and they want to go beyond point B. I-80 is highly successful. What we really need for economic development is a second interstate, not just anywhere, but by the principles that I just outlined. There's one place where this can be done. It runs from Highway 81 south of York through Columbus to Norfolk. Here is the question. Do we once more do as we've always done and just keep going up Highway 81 to a place where's there is no population, no cars traveling, or do we turn this road and make a new road directly to South Sioux City? At South Sioux City, you have I-29. Minnesota is building Highway 60, a four-lane system from the Twin Cities and the rest of Minnesota and Wisconsin, and Highway 20 also empties into this area, coming across from northern Illinois and Iowa. All of this traffic comes to South Sioux City, Nebraska. What do we do now? We keep them out of the state of Nebraska as long as we can. Why not invite them into the heart of Nebraska, coming from South Sioux City and down the Highway 81 expressway? I can think of no other...

SENATOR CUDABACK: One minute.

SENATOR JOHNSON: ...economic development package that we can possibly think of in this body that will have the economic impact that this will. I had a rough study made by my office and with the completion of this, roughly 92 percent of the people in Nebraska will be within 30 miles of this system.