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essentially links it with the American Southwest. It happens to go from South Sioux City through Norfolk down to Columbus, down to York or maybe even Grand Island, and then continue its way from Hastings to McCook, eventually. That kind of vision is what we need in rural Nebraska, and to his credit he gets it, not for his own parochial interests, but rather, for those of the entire state, the tax base. The future of our rural areas appreciate the work of Senator Johnson. But more important than that is the importance of our expressway system. In the Norfolk area, we thank the state Legislature and the Department of Roads and the Highway Commission every day for that four-lane expressway from Norfolk to Columbus. A couple of years ago Dale Vishay closed its operations in Norfolk. We lost roughly 400 jobs, what used to be 1,500 jobs. Because of that expressway system, we've been able to keep members in our community while they drive to Columbus and work at the plant down there. It doesn't sound like much to some folks, but when you have a town of 25,000 and you lose 400 jobs, let me tell you, that's significant. I know because firsthand, I'm watching as 1,350 people are leaving our community, following Tyson's announcement. But this expressway is more important than just Norfolk--it's about linking communities like Columbus and Grand Island; communities like Wisner, West Point with Omaha; communities south of Omaha and Lincoln, such as Nebraska City with our metro areas. The expressway system that Senator Byars drives each day to Beatrice, he probably thanks the Highway Commission for on days when there's a lot of traffic or even days without. This expressway system is a way to do good things in rural Nebraska, and Senator Johnson gets it and we appreciate that. I have been somewhat frustrated by the process. Before I took office I was told that we'd be touching base with landowners, as the Department of Roads would be doing that sometime in January of this year. Now I learn it's January of next year. And if everything goes right, we might start letting this project in northeast Nebraska between South Sioux and Norfolk out for bids in eight years, eight years! Isn't there a way to move things faster? Isn't there a way to recognize this as a project separate, above and beyond the current and existing projects we have, in the name of developing rural areas? I would be interested in letting Columbus go first and build the four lane down to Grand Island, or continue and complete the