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Omaha to go north, or you can find an alternative route for them that's a lot closer. And as far as our truck traffic, boy, our goods and services that we require for agriculture are moved by truck, and we need this kind of transportation. I know that Senator Johnson understands that we may not get much done this year, but if we're going to grow rural Nebraska, we've got to have roads. And I just commend Senator Johnson for taking this on. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Schrock. (Visitor introduced.) On with discussion. Senator Baker.

SENATOR BAKER: Thank you, Mr. President, members. I'm going to be brief, but I want to set the stage for those of you that are coming back next year. In both the Revenue Committee and the Transportation Committee, we heard bill after bill after bill asking for help building roads. These...exactly right. Senator Johnson, Senator Flood are exactly right. We have many, many needs. Roads provide an avenue for economic development, as well as a safety issue. We have not increased the Highway Trust Fund, the funding that goes to the Department of Roads, the cities and counties, for years. It's been flat. What's happened during that period of time? Traffic has increased on, particularly what we would consider expressway-eligible roads. Construction costs have gone up. Cement and steel have gone up. We've held the budget, maintained the budget. Luckily, the Department of Roads has been able to create some efficiencies out there. They're doing, I think it's a 47-mile project--one project--out in south central Nebraska. I think it's from...a lot of it is in Senator Schrock's district. But they have worked diligently in trying to create some efficiencies, but we've not increased the amount of money we're putting into roads. And as I said, costs have gone up dramatically over the last few years with steel and cement. But what we need to do, and I have carried this bill for years, it seems like, trying to raise the fuel tax. We're faced in January with an increase in the variable tax, just to make us whole in order to pay the contracts that are out there now, that are executed. I'm guessing that we may have to do that again. Fuel consumption, as I understand, is down some, but we're also going to have to address in the future, the legislators that are coming back, the