

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

February 1, 2001 LB 244

would connect, and the line that would impact us particularly would be Chicago, through Des Moines, to Omaha. Also connected with that rail network would be cities like Kansas City and Saint Louis and Detroit, Minneapolis, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and Cleveland, and so on, so forth. You can see for yourself. Questions have been raised to me by other senators about why we would do this; what is the reason for it; nobody is going to ride a train anyway. I don't know if they're right or...or if they're not right, but I do know that if this compact has any success and it results in high-speed rail being built, I would hate to see it end at Des Moines and not continue to Omaha. Of course, I would like to see it extend beyond Omaha, but realistically, with what this compact is looking at, I think I have to present you with what their stated...what their stated plans are. I think many things can affect whether or not this is ever a feasible service. Certainly the price of energy, the amount of potential traffic, whether or not we have interstates and roads that are capable of carrying all of the traffic that wants to travel between these metropolitan areas, those are all terrifically important as to whether or not this compact will ever do anything. There is some financial exposure if you join a compact such as this. The three states that have joined so far--Indiana, Minnesota and Missouri--did have a...have a meeting and they assessed themselves a \$25,000 assessment for the first year of the compact. The compact could only become effective when three states had voted to join it and that...that happened on August 28th of 2000 and, following that, they voted for the \$25,000 assessment. I think that the possible advantages of being...having our foot in the door through the compact outweighs my skepticism or concerns about whether or not there's any reason to be a part of this. Now that's just...that's my opinion based on what I have read and what I have heard at the hearing and what I heard last year, and so I...I guess I would ask for your consideration, your attention. And, again, as we get down to the part of the session where we...we really look at every dollar that we're spending, I don't know how this will stack up against other things that you think need to be funded, but the best fiscal note that I think anyone can give you at this point is that the assessment that has been rendered at this point is \$25,000 per state. Now, I think, as far as the impetus or the objectives of this compact are to use