

April 9, 1980

LB 722

will be from year to year Appropriations Committee and Legislature to Legislature the decision of those of us on the legislative floor as to priorities and directions. 722 establishes a whole new approach to funding highways, one which directly involves the Legislature in deciding on the basis of project needs the level of appropriation as opposed in the past, or on the basis of the amount of gas tax we have decided how much should be built. What that means is that if indeed each of us have concerns we will try and get those concerns expressed in that Appropriations bill, and although I haven't seen the language that Senator Maresh has, I doubt, in fact, that there is any way that we can write the Legislature out of the process any more. With 722 we say we are going to decide...review projects and decide on a level of appropriation and in turn then the Board of Equalization will set the tax. That means that we will be choosing projects. Now to Senator Murphy who seems to feel that this is, in fact, some effort to move money into urban areas, I would say it is exactly the opposite. The most expensive projects that are being discussed, such as the one that Senator Lewis raised, such as the North Expressway that we see in Omaha or the West Bypass in Lincoln, are in the urban areas. The new construction in these areas is tens of millions of dollars for five and six mile segments. If Senator Murphy wished to move money from urban to rural areas, he would, in fact, support this amendment. Basically, from what I can tell from discussion is that obviously there is not enough money to go around. Senator Lewis has a project that he says he has been waiting ten years for. I think it is very possible he could wait another ten years. There are projects in Lancaster County that have...where property has been in a corridor for over fifteen years and very likely will stay in that corridor for another ten years with no action. Obviously, there is not enough money. The Department of Roads is trying to fool people into believing they can do all things, and when can't they come in and ask for an increase. Someone has to set a system of priorities. I would suggest that it would be appropriate for this Legislature to do that statutorially. If such a system does not exist, I am sure that next year we will be debating amendments such as Senator Lewis' or Senator Maresh's in all seriousness, talking about this road or that road and this program and that program, whether or not they should be done. I am not sure this Legislature wants to take the time to do that, but if we do not now provide guidance to the Department of Roads, that is the situation we will find ourselves in. I would move for adoption of this amendment that establishes a priority system, something without which we will find

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