

March 14, 2019

Chair Witt,
Vice Chairs Gorsek and Sprenger, and
Members of the House Natural Resources Committee

I am here to testify on the -1 amendments to HB 2834, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties.

AOC represents Oregon's 36 counties. The County Road Program is under AOC's umbrella. The CRP assists road officials and Public Works Directors in counties across Oregon as they keep the county road system safe and operable. Across Oregon, counties have more road miles under their jurisdiction than ODOT.

County road officials are concerned that they were not consulted on HB 2834, but have been included in the bill. We believe that the best solutions are ones that are worked on by a broad base of stakeholders seeking real solutions to real problems. We work often with wildlife/traffic interactions in our counties. We want to be part of this conversation and respectfully request that we have that opportunity.

We also have great concern about how this program is going to be paid for. Across Oregon, right now, County road officials are grappling with recovering from winter storm events that devastated the roads in their jurisdictions. Already stretched thin maintenance dollars have been spent on snow and ice removal, downed trees, landslide repair and many other emergency efforts to keep roads open and our citizens safe. Because of this difficult winter weather season, many counties have or will tap reserve funds to keep their road open.

The challenge for a county public works department is to stretch available funding over existing needs, and there is not enough money to address those needs. Adding a program with no apparent funding is not good public policy, and it puts local government in an untenable position.

AOC urges you to continue to work on this concept, and to give Counties a seat at the table.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Susan Morgan
Natural Resources Policy Manager
Association of Oregon Counties