



Oregon

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DATE: May 14, 2019

TO: Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

FROM: Mac Lynde, Deputy Highway Division Administrator

SUBJECT: HB 2834A – Wildlife Corridors

INTRODUCTION

House Bill 2834A requires the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to develop a Wildlife Corridor Action Plan in cooperation with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). The bill further requires ODOT to establish a program to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions in areas identified in the Plan.

BACKGROUND

Oregon, like many other western states, experiences wildlife-vehicle conflict on public highways across the state. These conflicts can result in injury or death to the wildlife, as well as serious or fatal injury to the travelling public. These conflicts are common on highways like U.S. 97 and U.S. 20, where wildlife habitat and migration routes intersect public highways.

Wildlife crossings, which may take the form of an “under-crossing” or an “over-crossing,” are installed to allow wildlife to move safely from one side of the road to the other and keep motorists safe from potential collisions. In Oregon, about two fatalities per year are a direct result of wildlife-vehicle collision; research shows that crossing structures present an opportunity to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions by 85 percent. To date, ODOT has installed three wildlife under-crossings and has incorporated wildlife passage features on two additional projects. Three additional projects with wildlife passage features are planned for future construction. ODOT’s 2012 Lava Butte wildlife crossing installation resulted in an 85 percent decrease in wildlife-vehicle collisions along that stretch of U.S. 97.

DISCUSSION

House Bill 2834A directs ODFW to develop a Wildlife Corridor Action Plan to preserve the long-term habitat connectivity for wildlife. The bill directs ODOT to adopt a program to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions in areas identified in the Plan. ODOT will consider including wildlife crossing features as part of a project if the Plan indicates that a crossing could significantly reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions. HB 2834A emphasizes that the nexus for ODOT to incorporate wildlife crossing features on a project must be a reduction in wildlife-vehicle collisions and an improvement in public safety. The bill requires ODOT to report biennially regarding the status of the program, the number and types of wildlife corridor projects planned or constructed, and the impacts on the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions.

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HB 2834A represents a valuable opportunity for partnership and collaboration between ODOT and ODFW to further the distinct but complementary goals of both agencies.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any additional questions.