



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Transportation

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DATE: February 2, 2022

TO: House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

FROM: Kayla Hootsmans, Legislative Coordinator, Oregon Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: HB 4130 – Wildlife Corridors (-1) Amendment

INTRODUCTION

House Bill 4130, with the (-1) amendment, appropriates \$7 million in General Funds to the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) for the purpose of funding projects that reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve habitat connectivity. The measure directs ODOT to consult with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) when distributing funds and consider information such as the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan, the Oregon Connectivity Assessment and Mapping Project, and the Oregon Conservation Strategy.

BACKGROUND

Oregon, like many other western states, experiences wildlife-vehicle conflict on public highways across the state. These wildlife-vehicle collisions result in adverse impacts to wildlife populations, and especially in the case of collisions with ungulates, present safety hazards to the traveling public that can result in costly vehicle damage, and human injuries or death. ODOT data shows that upwards of 6,500 wildlife-vehicle collisions occur every year, but unfortunately that number is probably close to double that amount due to the high number of unreported collisions. Wildlife-vehicle collisions can and do occur statewide.

Wildlife crossing features, which may take the form of an under-crossing, over-crossing, signage, fencing, wildlife jump outs, and animal detection systems, 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 completed wildlife under-crossings in four locations, and has incorporated wildlife passage features on four additional projects. 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, and over 30 species have successfully passed under the highway.

DISCUSSION

House Bill 4130 with the (-1) amendment, allocates \$7 million in General Funds to ODOT to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve habitat connectivity. The flexibility of the funds in HB 4130 (-1) will allow ODOT, in coordination with ODFW, to make targeted investments where existing and future data shows the greatest need. Oregon has historically lagged behind other Western states in investing in structures and tools to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions. HB 4130 (-1) offers a much needed one time

infusion of funds that will allow Oregon to make meaningful progress towards reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions. The recently passed Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act contained a new Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program grant opportunity. The Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program is a \$350 million program over the next five years, with \$60 million in available funding in 2022. While the final rules have not yet been published, the passage of HB 4130 (-1) will allow ODOT to utilize these state funds as match towards this federal grant program.

HB 4130, with the (-1) amendment, brings forward an investment in Oregon's wildlife population to decrease the amount of wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve connectivity throughout Oregon.

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