



February 5, 2024

Committee Chair Ken Helm
Vice-Chairs Annessa Hartman and Mark Owens
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Statement of The Pew Charitable Trusts in support of HB 4148

Dear Chairman Helm and Vice-Chairs Hartman and Owens:

The Pew Charitable Trusts' U.S. Conservation Program is pleased to support your bill, HB 4148. This bill would improve efforts to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions by strengthening the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) wildlife-vehicle collision program and taking steps to secure long-term funding for the program.

Pew's US Conservation program advances common sense solutions that address the impacts of a changing climate on nature and people, in collaboration with policy makers, Tribes, and stakeholders. The identification and protection of wildlife migration corridors is a key component of our work.

Emerging science and new technologies provide considerable opportunity for states to integrate wildlife conservation into transportation policy. With advances in research technology such as GPS-enabled collars, we now have detailed information on how and where these animals travel between summer and winter habitats, how barriers such as highways and development can negatively affect wildlife populations, and where infrastructure interventions can have the greatest benefit for both wildlife and people.

In 2022, the ODOT recorded over 4,874 wildlife-vehicle collisions, resulting in human injury and fatalities, and significantly impacting migrating populations of ungulates. Multiple studies show that the actual number of wildlife-vehicle collisions is nearly three times the reported number.¹ New research from September 2022 finds that vehicle damage, medical expenses, and lost hunting value bring the average cost of a deer

¹ <https://www.publish.sciro.au/wr/pdf/WR20090>.

collision to \$16,967 and an elk collision is \$56,782.² The cumulative cost of collisions with those two species alone on Oregon's roads totaled \$91.7 million in 2022.³ Reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions is a win for motorists, wildlife, and local communities, making roads safer for people and allowing animals to safely traverse their migratory habitat.

HB 4148 will build on the state legislature's previous investments in wildlife crossings in 2022 and 2023 by bolstering technical guidance for integrating wildlife crossing features into highway projects, directing ODOT to recommend an ongoing dedicated funding strategy for the construction of wildlife crossings and other interventions, and requiring information related to projects, timelines, and funding needs.

Oregon has a growing number of success stories already, such as a wildlife crossing underpass that was constructed along highway 97 near Lava Butte which has reduced wildlife-vehicle collisions by 85%. The recently completed wildlife crossing on highway 97 at Gilchrist—a project that Pew helped finance and that benefited from the legislature's previous allocation—is showing similar results. The investments by the 2022 and 2023 legislature have yielded important results, bringing a crossing project on Hwy 97 to completion and advancing projects on I-5 near Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and Hwy 20 on the Burns Paiute Tribe's land in Malheur.

Despite a higher rate of wildlife-vehicle collisions than other west coast states, based on an analysis by State Farm Insurance,⁴ Oregon has fallen behind other western states in the construction of wildlife crossings. As of 2022, Oregon has five such structures, while Washington state has more than 30, Colorado has 69, Nevada has 23 for large mammals alone, Wyoming has 20, and Utah has 50. The investments by the 2022 and 2023 legislature have yielded important results, bringing a crossing project on Hwy 97 to completion and advancing projects on I-5 near Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and Hwy 20 on the Burns Paiute Tribe's land in Malheur.

These solutions are gaining attention at the national level and in departments of transportation across the country. For the first time, dedicated federal funds for a wildlife crossings grant program—\$350 million over five years—were included in the national infrastructure law enacted in 2021. And there is broad bipartisan support for wildlife crossings from voters across Oregon. A 2020 Pew-commissioned poll indicated that 86% of Oregonians favor the construction of more wildlife crossings on roads and

² Huijser, M.P., J.W. Duffield, C. Neher, A.P. Clevenger & T. McGuire. 2022. Cost-benefit analyses of migration measures along highways for large animal species: An update and an expansion of the 2009 model: https://www.mphetc.com/files/ugd/9d46fb_b9852393a44d4148bd92feac37fc034e.pdf

³ ODOT Wildlife Collision Data 2022

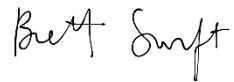
⁴ <https://www.statefarm.com/simple-insights/auto-and-vehicles/how-likely-are-you-to-have-an-animal-collision>

highways; 75% of Oregon voters from across the political and geographic spectrum supported increased funding to build more wildlife crossings on roads and highways.⁵

If enacted, the requirements in HB 4148 will be a significant step toward increased state commitment to the reduction of wildlife vehicle collisions and improved wildlife habitat connectivity.

Thank you for your consideration of Pew's support for HB 4148. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me at bswift@pewtrusts.org, or 971-344-5510, should I be able to provide additional information.

Sincerely,



Brett Swift
Senior Manager, U.S. Conservation
The Pew Charitable Trusts (Portland, Oregon Office)
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CC:

Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Rep. Court Boice

Rep. Mark Gamba

Rep. Bobby Levy

Rep. Pam Marsh

Rep. Susan McLain

Rep. Anna Scharf

⁵ [Pew: Oregonians Support Protecting Wildlife Migration Routes, New Poll Finds](#)