

HB 2978 A STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY**Carrier:** Rep. Helm**House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water****Action Date:** 03/24/25**Action:** Do Pass the A-Eng bill.**Vote:** 9-0-0-0**Yeas:** 9 - Boice, Hartman, Helm, Levy B, Marsh, McDonald, McLain, Owens, Scharf**Fiscal:** Has minimal fiscal impact**Revenue:** Has minimal revenue impact**Prepared By:** Anna Glueder, LPRO Analyst**Meeting Dates:** 2/5, 3/10, 3/24**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:**

The measure modifies the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Program (Program), instructs ODOT and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to establish an advisory group for the Program, and makes changes to ODOT's reporting requirements. The measure also requires ODFW to, subject to available funding, carry out projects to support wildlife mobility and habitat connectivity within certain priority areas, and in doing so, consider opportunities to secure competitive federal grants and other matching funds.

Detailed Summary**Modifications to the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Program**

- Adds the following program requirements:
 - feasibility studies;
 - updates to wildlife guidance materials and standards, highway specifications, construction, and modifications;
 - a training program for ODOT employees and other stakeholders on infrastructure-wildlife interactions, established in coordination with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW); and
 - a list of priority projects to reduce vehicle-wildlife collisions that is published on ODOT's website and developed jointly with ODFW, with opportunity for public input.
- Requires ODOT, jointly with ODFW, to consider and, to the extent feasible, plan for and incorporate measures and infrastructure to promote the protection of wildlife corridor connectivity from the impacts of transportation infrastructure in Oregon.
- Requires program projects that impact threatened or endangered species, or species of greatest conservation need as identified by ODFW, to include impact mitigation and crossing infrastructure, to the greatest extent feasible.

Establishment of a Program Advisory Group

- Directs ODOT and ODFW to establish a program advisory group through a joint memorandum of understanding (MOU) for
 - collaboration,
 - capacity and community outreach coordination,
 - science sharing, and
 - assistance with the identification of priority areas and priority projects.
- Authorizes the MOU to designate a willing nongovernmental entity to serve as a neutral facilitator of the advisory group.
- Specifies advisory group membership and meeting requirements and directs ODOT to publish advisory group meeting materials and recommendations on ODOT's website.

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- Sunsets the MOU and advisory group on January 2, 2035.

Modifications to ODOT's Program Reporting Requirements

Adds description of the following aspects to the content requirements of ODOT's biennial report:

- implementation timeline, cost estimate, and funding sources for proposed and prioritized wildlife corridor infrastructure projects.
- actions ODOT has taken to secure program funding and a strategy for ongoing program funding.
- efforts and successes of the newly established advisory group, including moneys directed to programs through public-private funding partnerships, community and stakeholder engagement, and addressing of priority areas.
- sunsets ODOT's reporting requirement related to the program advisory group on January 2, 2035.

Wildlife Mobility and Habitat Connectivity

- Requires ODFW to, subject to available funding, carry out projects to support wildlife mobility and habitat connectivity within priority areas identified in the Oregon Connectivity Assessment and Mapping Project, and in doing so, consider opportunities to secure competitive federal grants and other matching funds.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- History of wildlife crossings in Oregon
- Importance of deer and elk in wildfire mitigation
- Significance of wildlife corridor bridge across I-5 freeway

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Wildlife corridors are man-made infrastructures managed by the Oregon Department of Transportation that provide safe passage for animals navigating ecosystems fragmented by roads. Their purpose is to help animal migration during breeding season to other feeding grounds and reduce the chances of wildlife-vehicle collisions.

The first wildlife corridor in Oregon was built in 2012. In 2019, [House Bill 2834](#) led to the development of a Wildlife Corridor Action Plan under the direction of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Since then, several other wildlife corridor projects have been completed and research to determine best practices on location selection is ongoing.