

Submitter: Frank Huebsch

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2978

Co-Chair Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for introducing House Bill 2978, proposing to amend ORS 366.161 and ORS 366.162 to protect Oregon's wildlife, of high value to Oregonians. I strongly support HB 2978.

As a retired professional civil/structural engineer (California), I have been interested in the Oregon Wildlife Connectivity Implementation Plan and the Oregon Conservation Strategy (Oregon Wildlife Action Plan, now being updated by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife). Professionally, I have been engaged in public service and have served as a volunteer steward for public lands.

Since 2004, I have resided in Bend, OR, a city which has experienced recent rapid growth, and was employed by the City of Bend Community Development Department. The city is also a transportation hub with two primary highways intersecting in Bend, US-97 and US-20.

Recently, the Oregon Department of Transportation completed the US-97/US-20 Bend North Corridor Project to alleviate congestion on US-97 caused by commercial traffic which was previously regulated by traffic signals at the Cooley Road and Robal Road intersections with US-97. The ODOT project included constructing a bypass of the US-97 Business Corridor. While the improvements have reduced traffic congestion, traffic on the Bend Parkway (US-97) just south of the Bend North Corridor Project now travels at speeds averaging more than 10 mph over the posted speed limit of 45 mph.

It is well known to Bend residents that Bend is in a migratory corridor of mule deer. These migratory species need access to the winter ranges surrounding Bend for their survival. As a long distance trail hiker in wilderness and other public lands, I am familiar with wildlife migration in Central Oregon.

Driving during the morning commute last Fall Northbound on the Bend Parkway just south of the Area of Potential Impacts, as defined in the US-97 Bend North Corridor Project July 2014 Final Environmental Impact Statement, I noticed that six mule deer bucks were standing on the shoulder of the road waiting for an opportunity to get across 4 busy lanes of vehicular traffic. I immediately slowed to a stop and turned on my hazard warning lights (I was driving my new \$47,000 truck and did not want to be

rear-ended or suffer whiplash injury!).

I believe that passage of HB 2978 represents an important advancement of the Oregon Wildlife Connectivity Implementation Plan and encourage you to prioritize it's passage. As stated in "Road Ecology - Science and Solutions," Richard T.T. Forman, et all, Island Press, 2003, p 386:

"Those government bodies more committed to environmental protection employ some form of strategic management with goal setting, benchmarking, and performance measurement."

Wildlife crossings and fencing are highly effective, and Oregon needs more wildlife structures. HB 2978 and an option for permanent state-level funding to support wildlife crossing initiatives will:

Improve the safety of Oregon's roadways

Remove barriers to wildlife

Make Oregon more competitive in capturing federal funding

Please build on the important progress at the state legislature over the past five years by passing HB 2978.

Sincerely,

Frank J Huebsch

Bend, OR