

Submitter: Donna Harris
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3362
Co-Chair Gorsek and McLain, Co-Vice Chairs Starr and Davis, and Members of the Committee:

I am an Oregon resident asking you to support HB 3362.

Each year in Oregon, there are over 7,000 wildlife-vehicle collisions with large animals. On average, four people die and over 500 people are seriously injured. The cost of these collisions on Oregon roadways is likely more than \$100 million each year.

For over 5 yrs. I was a member and volunteer of Protect Animal Migration which advocated for our mule deer and elk and for habitat preservation and connectivity. Part of my responsibility was to combine all the deer/ vehicle collisions occurring within Deschutes Co roads which were the City of Bend, ODOT , and county roads . Over 5 yrs. of gathering statistics from each road dept., the totals of deer/ vehicle collisions were on average 1000 killed per year! This number is just one county! State Farm statistics at the time figured that each vehicle collision with a deer cost each Oregon resident around \$6500 and each collision with an elk cost over \$15,000. The cost are much higher now: around \$17,000 for deer collisions and \$57,000 for elk collisions!!! So even though the investment in a wildlife crossing can be in the millions of dollars, this investment can be made up quickly because of these “ hidden “ costs to the public through vehicle damage and human injury or death. And of course, let us not forget about the decimation of these deer populations , where in central Oregon the mule deer population is only at 50% of sustainability, and where their population is declining at the rate of 10% / yr. Protect Animal Migration was able to obtain grant funding for some of the funnel fencing for one undercrossing for wildlife along HWY 97, south of Sunriver. Since then several other crossings have been proposed . Some funding will come from each purchase of the Watch For Wildlife license plate, which I have done. I also have made donations to Oregon Wildlife Foundation to be used for the proposed crossing over Hwy 20. between Black Butte and Suttle Lake . But much more sustainable funding is needed and this tax on tire purchases makes a lot of sense without being too burdensome. Oregon is way behind many western states who already have devoted funding to building wildlife crossings , where some states have dozens of crossings. An astounding 86% of Oregonians favor wildlife crossings.

Fortunately, there is a solution. Wildlife crossing structures are a proven, popular, and cost-effective technique to improve public safety and restore habitat connectivity.

Oregon needs a permanent source of funding to implement state programs and projects to improve motorist and wildlife safety. Permanent funding would:

Improve the safety of Oregon's roadways

Remove barriers to wildlife

Make Oregon more competitive in capturing federal funding

Please protect both our wildlife and our communities by supporting HB 3362.