



To
Joint Transportation Committee
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon

Date: 03.04.2025

Sub: Testimony in support of HB 3362 and -1 amendment

Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Co-Vice Chairs Starr and Boshart Davis and Members of the Committee

I am Dr Sristi Kamal and I am the Deputy Director at Western Environmental Law Center. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of my organization in support of HB 3362 and its -1 amendment, which would levy a 4% tax on the sales of tires that will in turn address tire pollution issues in the state, and promote wildlife connectivity by reducing wildlife vehicle collisions.

Wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVC) poses a serious safety and economic issue. Wildlife species have to disperse, migrate and move through habitats in search of food, mates and new territories. However, with ever increasing built infrastructure on the landscape, such movement corridors are often obstructed by roadways and highways, and can lead to dangerous collisions, and loss of wildlife. This is especially challenging for a species with greatest conservation needs. Each year, there are over 7,000 collisions each year, resulting in over 500 serious human injuries and an average of four human fatalities. The actual number of collisions is likely higher, as multiple studies concluded that half or two-thirds of large mammal WVC go unreported. The economic costs of such collisions can also be significant – starting with the cost of vehicle repair/replacement, emergency road services, medical services, road clean up services, the opportunity cost of losing the animal, time off from work to recover, to name a few.

The Western Transportation Institute (WTI) estimates that each deer collision costs a total of \$19,038 per collision and each elk collision costs \$73,196 per collision. This means *Oregon has a \$114 million per year deer-vehicle collision problem and elk collisions have cost Oregonians an estimated \$26 million.*

Properly sites wildlife crossings on the other hand, are known to decrease such dangerous collisions significantly. Oregon's own Highway 97 crossing project has reduced deer-vehicle collisions by over 90%. The famous Banff National Park crossings have reduced ungulate collisions by nearly 90% and Colorado's crossings in the Blue River Valley have also reduced collisions by almost 90%. Yet, Oregon has only six completed crossings while Nevada has 20, Colorado has over 60 and Montana has over

100 crossings. This need is also recognized by Oregonians who support having more crossings in the state. A 2020 poll commissioned by the Pew Charitable Trusts found that 86% of Oregon voters favor constructing more wildlife crossings and 75% voters supported increasing state funding to build those crossings.

HB 3362's 4% tax will contribute 25% of the revenue generated for funding wildlife crossings in the state and would establish the "Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Reduction Fund." This Fund could also be used as a state match in the event federal funding for WVC reduction and habitat connectivity becomes available. Having a consistent, reliable state source of funding will allow ODOT and other agencies to plan and implement projects that need large scale funding over time.

We also support the use of 25% of the revenue generated from this tax for addressing tire pollution and chemical runoff which are highly toxic to aquatic species, including native and imperiled species like our coho salmon. Modern tires contain "6PPD," to improve tire durability that extends tire lifespan. One such durability test is also known as the "Moose Test" where a tire is tested for its ability to maneuver quickly in the presence of an expected and sudden large obstacle (a large mammal, like a moose). 6PPD helps tires fare better in the "moose test" and decreases the chances of a car flipping over in the event of a collision.

However, 6PPD, in contact with ozone in the air converts to 6PPD-quinone that is extremely harmful for fish and wildlife in our waters. The Environmental Protection Agency reports that 6PPD-quinone is "toxic enough to quickly kill some fish". A 2021 publication in the scientific journal *Science* linked coho salmon death to 6PPD-quinone in stormwater.

This minimal tire sales tax increase will help address some of the environmental impacts of products such as 6PPD-quinone on aquatic ecosystems and fish and wildlife that depend on it.

Oregon used to have a tires sales tax in the 1990s which does not exist currently. Reinstating the tax at a minimal percentage can make a significant contribution to the state's transportation system and its environment, along with public safety for many years to come. I urge you to vote YES on HB 3362.

Thank you for taking my testimony into consideration.

Sincerely

Sristi Kamal

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Deputy Director

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