

Submitter: Kyle Collins  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and  
Wildfire  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2978

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my support for HB 2978-A and the future wildlife crossing structures this legislation could help facilitate. At this point, more than a decade of science both within the United States and internationally have shown the significant increase in road safety and the cost effectiveness of all manner of wildlife crossing infrastructure.

Here in Central Oregon, we are lucky to have some of the first largescale wildlife crossing underpasses along Highway 97.

Since these structures have been installed, wildlife impacts along US 97 have decreased in this area by over 90%, with reductions occurring almost immediately after completion of these projects. I have personally felt the increase in safety driving on US 97, particularly in the fall months as large herds of mule deer are making their way to winter range across the high desert.

These types of projects show that we can reduce our negative impacts of habitat fragmentation, while also reaping safety benefits for all motorists. Unfortunately, Oregon is far behind many of our neighboring western states in constructing these projects, including Washington and Idaho. We have significant catch up to do in regards to do in reconnecting our natural wildlife habitats and reducing unnecessary risk to our residents and visitors. I believe HB 2978-A and an option for permanent state-level funding to support wildlife crossing initiatives will remove barriers for or wildlife populations and increase the overall safety of our roads. Additionally, by dedicating local funds to these projects, we will make our state much more competitive for federal funding when the opportunity arises to pursue matching grants or loans.

If we wish to have healthy wildlife populations into the future, these projects are increasingly urgent as we continue to fragment natural spaces with human development, so I urge to build on the progress at the state legislature over the past five years by passing HB 2978-A.

Sincerely,  
-Kyle Collins, Bend, OR