



Oregon  
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**DATE:** April 15, 2025

**TO:** Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildlife

**FROM:** Amy Ramsdell – Administrator, Delivery and Operations Division,  
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**SUBJECT: HB 2978A – Wildlife Crossings**

## INTRODUCTION

[House Bill 2978A](#) adds statutory requirements that are largely consistent with the Oregon Department of Transportation's (ODOT) existing Wildlife Crossings Program work and processes. The measure directs ODOT, in partnership with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), to expand its existing Wildlife Crossings Program to include small species and to develop a list of projects to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and promote public safety in priority areas identified in ODFW's Wildlife Corridor Action Plan (WCAP); conduct feasibility studies; develop a training program; update wildlife guidance and standards materials; formalize an advisory group; expand existing legislative reporting requirements; and requires ODOT to consider, where feasible, installing infrastructure to mitigate the impact to wildlife connectivity in transportation infrastructure. Furthermore, the measure directs ODFW, subject to available funding, to carry out projects to support wildlife mobility and habitat connectivity within priority areas.

## BACKGROUND

Oregon has a diverse wildlife population, whose habitats and migration patterns often intersect with the state's transportation system. Wildlife-vehicle collisions pose significant safety risks for system users and wildlife and have adverse cost impacts (vehicle costs, roadway repairs, medical costs, etc.). Oregon's transportation system sees about 7,000 wildlife-vehicle collisions (2017 – 2021), about 36 serious injuries (2017-2021), and about 4 fatalities (2017-2021) per year.

ODOT's priority focus is on creating wildlife connections through transportation infrastructure that reduce large wildlife-vehicle collisions and increase public safety on the state transportation system. Wildlife crossings help animals get where they need to go while reducing the chances of vehicle-wildlife collision, ultimately creating a safer transportation system for all.

The 2019 Legislature created ODOT's Wildlife Crossings Program with the passage of [HB 2834](#), which included a biannual reporting requirement for ODOT. The Department's existing Wildlife Crossings Program is focused on reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions with large species to improve safety for system users and wildlife and reduce property damage on state highways.

The program currently does not have a dedicated funding source. Furthermore, State Highway Funds (SHF) can only be used to design, construct, or maintain features to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions for large species (for which a public safety nexus exists) due to constitutional constraints on eligible uses of SHF.

[HB 5202](#) (2022) appropriated \$7M of one-time General Funds to ODOT for the purpose of reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions and improving habitat connectivity for wildlife. To date, ODOT has invested \$6.9M of the \$7M General Fund towards three projects across the state, including I-5 Mariposa Preserve Overcrossing (Design work: \$1.5M, and IJA Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program Grant Match: \$3.8M); US97 Gilchrist Fencing Project (\$600K); and US20 Harper-Juntura planning and design (\$1M). In December 2024, the Federal Highway Administration awarded ODOT \$33M of the IJA Wildlife Passage Pilot Program Grant for the I-5 Mariposa Reserve Overcrossing Project.

## DISCUSSION

Wildlife crossings are a valuable safety feature for Oregon's state transportation system. ODOT appreciates the Legislature's continued interest in reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions and restoring landscape connectivity for wildlife. ODOT has been engaged with the Sponsor and ODFW on the development of HB 2978, and the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water adopted a –2 amendment.

The –2 amendment includes three substantive changes to the base bill:

- Includes consideration of “public safety” more expressly in the Wildlife Crossings Program's charge to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions in priority areas identified in the WCAP.
- Reduced the number of required meeting times for the advisory committee from 2 to 1 on an annual basis.
- Expands existing reporting requirements for ODOT's [biannual report](#) to the Legislature on the status of the Wildlife Crossings Program, per HB 2834 ([ORS 366.162](#)).

Today, the need for wildlife crossing infrastructure outweighs available resources. Furthermore, Oregon's constitutional framework around eligibility and use of SHF dollars limit ODOT's work to state highways and projects that increase public safety by reducing large species wildlife-vehicle collisions, creating additional barriers to addressing the needs for small species. It's important to note ODOT cannot use SHF dollars to construct or maintain small wildlife features. ODOT would need identified, dedicated resources to plan, design, construct, and maintain any new features.

With the passage of HB 2978A without a dedicated funding source, ODOT would carry out the legislative intent of measure to the greatest extent possible within the means of existing resources, staff capacity, and through collaboration with ODFW. ODOT would be able to absorb the work of updating wildlife guidance and standards materials and continuing the work of developing a list of priority projects in coordination with ODFW. It is ODOT's understanding that ODFW will be lead on the implementation of the training program requirement in the measure to help alleviate workload on ODOT, and the agencies will jointly formalize and staff the advisory committee for a meeting once a year, or more if desired, with a sunset date of January 2, 2035.

## CONCLUSION

HB 2978A codifies work and processes largely consistent with ODOT's Wildlife Crossings Program

and uplifts the on-going partnership between ODOT and ODFW to carry out this work. The measure directs ODOT to expand its Wildlife Crossings Program to include smaller wildlife species and develop a priority project list with ODFW; conduct feasibility studies; develop a training program; update wildlife guidance and standards materials; establish an advisory committee; expand existing legislative reporting requirements; consider wildlife connectivity mitigation features in transportation infrastructure; and directs ODFW, subject to available funding, to carry out habitat connectivity projects within priority areas.

ODOT appreciates the Legislature's continued commitment to the Wildlife Crossings Program in Oregon and looks forward to the ongoing partnership with ODFW.