

Submitter: Liza Baer
On Behalf Of: Wildlife Crossing Funding
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

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

Wildlife crossings are essential for the health of animal populations, as well as preventing car accidents with animals trying to cross roads. Please support HB 2025 Sections 111 and 117, which establish the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Reduction Fund at an annual rate of \$10 million per biennium.

Habitat loss and fragmentation make it difficult for wildlife to migrate and disperse to access food, habitat, and mates. For many species in Oregon, our highways are a significant challenge to their survival. Many wildlife species are killed in vehicle collisions every year on our roadways. Bird Alliance states that mule deer are the most commonly hit animal in Oregon and its population has declined by over 50% in recent years.

Wildlife-vehicle collisions take a costly toll on people as well. According to ODOT, there are over 7,000 collisions per year resulting in over 500 serious human injuries and four fatalities. This is the highest rate among West Coast states. Millions of dollars of damage are incurred every year from such collisions. Wildlife crossings work. The Lava Butte underpass on HWY 97 in central Oregon has reduced deer collisions by over 90% since construction.

HB 2025 Sections 111 and 117 build upon past efforts of the Legislature to address the problem of the loss of wildlife connectivity and the high rate of wildlife-vehicle collisions by establishing and sustainably funding the "Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Reduction Fund." This would be a significant step in addressing the safety and environmental consequences of habitat fragmentation caused by roadways and would position Oregon alongside Utah as the only state with annual funding for wildlife crossings.

Thank you for strongly consider this request!

Sincerely,
Liza Baer