

Submitter: Chelsea Stewart Fusek

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

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

I ask that you 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 fragmentation has incredibly harmful impacts on our state's wildlife populations. For many species in Oregon, our highways are one of the biggest challenges to their survival, and innumerable wildlife species are killed in vehicle collisions every year on our roadways. This includes charismatic species like Pacific marten and wolves, as well as important species like frogs and snakes. Vehicle collisions also harm our state's game species, such as mule deer (which are the most commonly hit animal in Oregon -- their population has declined by over 50% in recent years).

Investing in wildlife crossings not only helps our wildlife, but also reduce risks to public safety. 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. Fortunately, wildlife crossings work. The Lava Butte underpass on HWY 97 in central Oregon has reduced deer collisions by over 90% since construction.

The Wildlife Crossings bill (HB 2978) took a big step in helping to improve the problem of increasing wildlife collisions on our roadways. However, funding is needed to implement wildlife crossings projects at key places across the state. Please support HB 2025 Sections 111 and 117 to ensure successful implementation of these projects.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Stewart-Fusek