

Submitter: David Harrison
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,

As Conservation Chair of Salem Audubon Society, I am writing to urge your support for 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 are making it difficult for wildlife to move around and migrate where they need to go to survive. Highways are especially challenging for many species in Oregon, and many vulnerable wildlife species are killed in vehicle collisions every year on our roadways. This includes charismatic species such as mountain lions and wolves and also includes important game species such as mule deer.

Wildlife-vehicle collisions also take a costly toll on people. 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 we know that wildlife crossings work. As an example, the Lava Butte underpass on US 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.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
David Harrison
Conservation Chair
Salem Audubon Society