

June 26, 2025

Senate Committee on Rules
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Testimony in Support of HB2977

Submitted by Corrinne Oedekerk Dombrowski

Chair, Members of the Committee:

When potential visitors and residents alike envision their experience in Oregon, they often picture our dramatic landscapes and the native wildlife that inhabit them. Oregon is uniquely rich in ecological diversity—where one can travel from the sagebrush sea to the Pacific Ocean, through dense temperate rainforests and into rugged mountain terrain, all in a single day. While some protections exist for these habitats, the non-game species that call them home often lack the resources necessary for their continued survival. This not only threatens biodiversity but also diminishes the very experience that draws people to Oregon.

My name is Corrinne Oedekerk Dombrowski, and I am writing today as a private citizen in strong support of HB2977. I have spent years learning about the impacts of wildlife-vehicle collisions, particularly involving deer and elk, and I care deeply about how these issues affect both Oregon's ecosystems and the safety of those who travel our roads.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) estimates approximately 7,000 reported elk and deer-vehicle collisions (EDVCs) occur annually. However, this figure likely underrepresents the true scale of the problem. Many animals die off-road, are obscured by vegetation, or are removed through the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's (ODFW) roadkill salvage program. These numbers also exclude other species and incidents on county and city roads. As a result, the actual number of wildlife-vehicle collisions in Oregon remains unknown.

Even crash statistics that result in property damage or injury are likely underreported due to cost thresholds, reporting reluctance, or misclassification of the cause (e.g., listing the animal as a secondary factor). Estimates from 2014–2018 suggest that reported wildlife-vehicle collisions cost Oregonians between \$115–\$135 million annually. This figure does not account for hidden costs such as long-term physical and emotional trauma. Importantly, these risks are not borne by Oregonians alone—visitors to our state are equally vulnerable.

Wildlife passage programs, including the construction of wildlife crossing structures, offer a proven solution. These structures not only restore habitat connectivity across landscapes and seasons but also significantly reduce the risk of wildlife-vehicle collisions. Yet, Oregon lags behind neighboring states in implementing these lifesaving and cost-saving measures.

HB2977, a proposal with broad bipartisan support, provides a sustainable funding mechanism by equitably distributing costs among Oregonians and out-of-state visitors. It represents a forward-thinking investment in public safety, ecological stewardship, and the preservation of Oregon's natural heritage—one of our most compelling ecosystem services.

I deeply appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this important legislation.

Corrinne Oedekerke

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