



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Transportation

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DATE: March 14, 2019

TO: House Committee on Natural Resources

FROM: Mac Lynde, Deputy Highway Division Administrator

SUBJECT: HB 2834(-1) – Wildlife Corridors

INTRODUCTION

House Bill 2834(-1) requires the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to consult with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) on development of a Wildlife Corridor and Safe Road Crossing Action Plan. The bill further requires the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) to adopt a program to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions in areas identified in the Plan.

BACKGROUND

Oregon, like many other western states, experiences wildlife-vehicle conflict on public highways across the state. These conflicts can result in injury or death to the wildlife, as well as serious or fatal injury to the travelling public. These conflicts are common on highways like U.S. 97 and U.S. 20, where wildlife habitat and migration routes intersect public highways.

Wildlife crossings, which may take the form of an “under-crossing” or an “over-crossing,” are installed to allow wildlife to move safely from one side of the road to the other and keep motorists safe from potential collisions. In Oregon, about two fatalities per year are a direct result of wildlife-vehicle collision; research shows that crossing structures present an opportunity to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions by 85 percent. To date, ODOT has installed three wildlife under-crossings and has incorporated wildlife passage features on two additional projects. Three additional projects with wildlife passage features are planned for future construction. ODOT’s 2012 Lava Butte wildlife crossing installation resulted in an 85 percent decrease in wildlife-vehicle collisions along that stretch of U.S. 97.

DISCUSSION

House Bill 2834, with the (-1) amendment, directs ODFW and ODOT to develop a Wildlife Corridor and Safe Road Crossing Plan to preserve the long-term habitat connectivity for wildlife. The measure directs OTC to adopt a county grant program to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions in areas identified in the Plan. The measure also calls for the OTC-adopted program to promote wildlife migration, and increased wildlife and public safety.

ODOT supports the bill’s intent but recommends clarifying the following:

- Ensuring continued focus and prioritization on transportation system needs;
- Ensuring eligible use of State Highway Fund dollars;

- Balancing wildlife crossing opportunities with other leverage opportunities and needs across the transportation system; and
- Ensuring data-driven identification of wildlife crossing investments.

HB 2834 represents a unique opportunity for partnership and collaboration between ODOT and ODFW to further the distinct but complementary goals of each agency. ODOT looks forward to continued work on subsequent amendments to this measure that reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve highway safety across the state.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any additional questions.