

HB 4130 -1 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

House Committee On Environment and Natural Resources

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Sub-Referral To: Joint Committee On Ways and Means

Meeting Dates: 2/2

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Appropriates \$5 million from the General Fund to the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) for wildlife corridor projects for the biennium ending June 30, 2023. Requires ODOT to consult with the State Department of Fish and Wildlife when distributing funds and take into consideration relevant information, including the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan, the Oregon Conservation Strategy, and the Oregon Connectivity Assessment and Mapping Project. Authorizes ODOT to distribute funds for the full range of wildlife corridor project needs, including but not limited to project feasibility studies, planning, construction, retrofit and maintenance of wildlife road crossing infrastructure, roadkill tracking and studies, animal detection systems, signage, exclusionary fencing, and wildlife jump outs. Requires ODOT to prioritize distributions for projects that fill funding gaps for wildlife road crossings and connectivity that are not otherwise budgeted for or required under other federal or state obligations. Authorizes ODOT to make fund distributions to assist projects with state match requirements of federal grant programs relating to wildlife corridors. Declares emergency, effective on passage.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

-1 Appropriates **\$7 million** out of the General Fund for the biennium ending June 30, 2023 to the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) for projects that reduce the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve **habitat** connectivity for wildlife.

Requires ODOT to consult with the State Department of Fish and Wildlife when distributing funds and take into consideration relevant information, including the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan, the Oregon Connectivity Assessment and Mapping Project, and the Oregon Conservation Strategy **adopted by the State Fish and Wildlife Commission**. Authorizes ODOT to distribute funds for the full range of wildlife corridor project needs, including but not limited to project feasibility studies, planning, construction, retrofit and maintenance of wildlife road crossing infrastructure, roadkill tracking and studies, animal detection systems, signage, **directional** fencing, and wildlife jump outs. Authorizes ODOT to partner with or make distributions to tribes, counties, cities, or other public or private entities for wildlife corridor project.

BACKGROUND:

Oregon's natural environment is home to several large-bodied animals such as elk, mule deer, and pronghorn antelope. These animals, along with many other species, rely on migration routes for access to food, water, and shelter across the seasons. Landscapes surrounding migration routes often experience change due to human population growth and associated residential, commercial, and transportation development. Changes in land use create obstacles in existing migration corridors, leaving animals isolated and vulnerable. Wildlife corridors, which are pathways of undeveloped land connecting one area of habitat to another, provide safe passage for animals needing to navigate a fragmented ecosystem.

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) maintains a wildlife collisions location database which illustrates where these collisions are concentrated. In 2020, the total reported wildlife-vehicle collisions count was 5,997 for all species tracked by ODOT. The highest collision counts in the state occurred with deer and elk. In

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2012, ODOT constructed a wildlife crossing under Highway 97. In 2014, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) reported an 80 percent decrease in deer mortality along the affected stretch of highway. In 2020, an additional wildlife corridor was constructed under Highway 97, north of Gilchrist, as part of ODOT's U.S. 97 Passing Lanes Project. Oregon's wildlife corridor projects have historically been locally funded and led, including through state agency or non-governmental organization grant programs and community contributions.

House Bill 4130 would appropriate \$5 million to the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) for wildlife corridor projects and authorize ODOT to make fund distributions to assist projects with state match requirements of federal grant programs relating to wildlife corridors.