

Co-Chairs McLain and Gorsek and Committee Members:

My name is Amy Amrhein, and I am retired Field Representative for Senator Jeff Merkley in SW Oregon. I am the Co-Coordinator, with Jack Williams, of the Southern Oregon Wildlife Crossing Coalition. Representatives from 17 organizations and agencies that comprise our Coalition have been advocating, fundraising, and working with ODOT staff since Spring of 2021 to identify, plan for, and construct a wildlife crossing on the Interstate 5 freeway between Ashland and the California border. This stretch of interstate bisects the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument and has been identified by ODOT as an area of high Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions that occur due to migrations and animals seeking expanded habitat. It is also within an ODFW Priority Wildlife Connectivity Area (PWCA).

We want to effusively thank the staff at ODOT Region 3 for their strong support and work on this project. Since my first cold call to Interim Manager Darrin Neuvol, he and his staff have been enthusiastic supporters and have embraced the project as their own. They allocated \$1.5 million from the new State fund for engineering design and will complete the work to DAP standards this month. They are reapplying to the federal Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program grant and we are all hopeful of success with a full funding grant award for construction. Federal Highway Administration staff were highly complementary of the project in last year's application debrief.

In conclusion, on behalf of SOWCC, I want to advocate for ongoing funding in ODOT's annual safety budget for planning and construction of wildlife crossings on Oregon highways and byways. The costs of WVC's to motorists and commerce, and the success of Oregon's Highway 97 projects as well as other states' over and under-crossings, are well documented. It is time for Oregon to identify an ongoing revenue stream to support this important work and to serve as match money so we can bring federal dollars home to Oregon to support safe passage on both inter and intrastate highways.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Amy Amrhein  
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[www.myowf/sowcc](http://www.myowf/sowcc)