

Submitter: Joseph Vaile
On Behalf Of: Self
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3362

Co-Chair Gorsek and McLain, Co-Vice Chairs Starr and Davis, and Members of the Committee:

Investing in wildlife crossings is effective at reducing wildlife vehicle collisions. A great example is the system of existing structures along U.S. 97 that have reduced deer collisions and saved lives. According to a poll by GBAO Strategies in 2020, public support for expanding this infrastructure is strong, with 86% of Oregon voters in favor of building more crossings and 75% supporting increased funding.

Oregon experiences over 7,000 wildlife-vehicle collisions annually. We can't just turn a blind eye to these tragic events. These collisions result in an average of four fatalities and 521 serious injuries every year. The human and economic toll is significant, with deer-vehicle collisions alone costing an estimated \$114 million annually, while elk collisions add another \$26 million in damages.

However, there is currently no dedicated state or federal funding to systematically reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions. It is your job as legislators to address this issue. ODOT estimates that a \$5 million annual investment could fund an additional 20 wildlife fencing and crossing projects over the next 30 years.

HB 3362 proposes a 4% tax on vehicle tire sales, modeled after a past Oregon tire tax, to generate approximately \$20 million per year. The estimated individual impact is minimal—about \$6 per new tire. Importantly, 25% of the revenue would be dedicated to wildlife crossing infrastructure, such as overpasses and underpasses, making roads safer for both wildlife and drivers.

At a time of uncertainty regarding federal funding, this sustained investment would strengthen Oregon's wildlife-vehicle collision reduction efforts, saving lives, reducing economic losses, and ensuring safer roads for all. I urge you to address this issue and pass HB 3362.