

Submitter: Kyle Collins
On Behalf Of:
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:

I am writing to express my strong support for HB 3362. As a resident of Central Oregon, I have been the direct beneficiary of the first large scale wildlife crossing efforts in the state. Driving south from Bend on Highway 97 is now a much less harrowing experience, particularly in the fall months, as I am not constantly on edge wondering if a deer, elk, or other large creature will dart into incoming traffic. As someone who is required to travel throughout Deschutes County for work, I appreciate these efforts immensely for the added safety and peace of mind they add to my commutes.

Additionally, as someone who believes our local wildlife is one of our most precious resources in Oregon, I am supportive of any and all efforts to maintain wildlife populations throughout the state. Research over the past several years in road ecology and population dynamics has shown that in order to maintain stable and healthy populations of animals, they must be able to move seamlessly across large landscapes in response to changing seasons, food availability, and simply to promote gene transfer among individuals. If we want to maintain and recover populations of wildlife such as mule deer, then we must begin to tackle one of the largest sources of non-natural mortality, which comes from vehicles strikes and habitat fragmentation.

Wildlife crossing help these larger, charismatic species, but they also aid species of all shapes and sizes, all of whom play a crucial role in our natural systems. These crossings are highly effective and Oregon needs more crossing structures throughout every corner of our state. While the under crossings at places like Lava Butte, Gilchrist, and others in Central Oregon are immensely beneficial for public safety and wildlife health, we simply need more of this type of infrastructure to ensure the long term health of our state. HB 3362 and an option for permanent state-level funding to support wildlife crossing initiatives will ultimately help improve the safety of our roads, connect habitats for migrating wildlife, and importantly will make Oregon more competitive in capturing federal funding. This last piece is important as more and more states recognize the value of the these projects and seek out funding at the federal level.

While Oregon has made some important investments in the this area over the last decades, we still lag behind most of our neighboring states largely due to the sheer

scale of the need and the lack of dedicated funding for projects. Please build on this progress at the state legislature by passing HB 3362.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

-Kyle Collins

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