

Submitter: Steve Wise
On Behalf Of: Southern Oregon Land Conservancy
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3362

Dear Rep. Helm and Sen. Gorsek:

I am writing on behalf of the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy in support of HB 3362, the Tire Pollution Tax bill, and in particular to support the bill's allocation of funding to wildlife crossing projects across Oregon.

Monitoring of wildlife crossings in Oregon and elsewhere shows them to be highly effective and impactful for public safety, reducing wildlife collisions by 80-90 percent. In doing so they not only contribute to the survival and biological and genetic diversity of migratory wildlife like deer, elk, bear and Pacific fisher in our region, but deliver significant savings in the cost of vehicle repair, not to mention the human suffering and trauma people experience if they are unfortunate enough to strike an animal in their car.

In our region, the planned Mariposa Wildlife Crossing across I-5 near the California gained funding from the Federal Highway Administration in late 2024, following design work by ODOT that was supported by funds like those this bill would create. The Mariposa Wildlife Crossing will establish a key link across a migratory corridor that is widely recognized as key to survival of wildlife in our very biologically diverse region, highlighted by the Cascade Siskiyou National Monument which was protected for its ecological uniqueness. The availability of state funds will leverage larger infrastructure investment, such as the FHWA grant that is expected to pay for construction of the Mariposa crossing.

Placing this limited tax on tire sales effectively and appropriately ties wildlife crossing funding to the automobile traffic that will directly benefit from safety improvement and cost savings that wildlife crossings can deliver.

Southern Oregon Land Conservancy is the first and oldest non-profit regional land trust in Oregon, and our service area includes a focus area in the Coe-Stin-Siskiyou Summit area. We permanently protect non-federal lands -- mostly private but including municipal lands -- to sustain their human and natural communities. We currently protect more than 2,500 acres of land adjacent the planned Mariposa Wildlife Crossing, and have been working with a regional coalition to gain construction of the crossing to eliminate the single greatest barrier to migration. In areas like this, an established state fund for wildlife crossings will enhance wildlife conservation and connectivity, as well as climate resilience, by allowing the highly effective and cost saving crossing projects that give animals safe seasonal passage

in areas prized for its natural values and still healthy populations of migratory wildlife.

We urge you to pass this important legislation, and help Oregon invest in a proven win-win-win solution for people, public safety, and the wildlife that make our region a special place.

Thank you for your efforts.

-- Steve Wise
Executive Director
Southern Oregon Land Conservancy