

Testimony of David Ellenberger: 4/16/25 Ways & Means Salem, OR Community Budget Hearing

Good evening - for the record my name is David Ellenberger, and I am the Oregon Project Manager for Wildlands Network. I live in NE Portland.

As an Oregonian that loves wildlife and the outdoors and also one that has to do a fair bit of driving to access our state's natural wonders, I was delighted to see the inclusion of an annual funding mechanism for ODOT to construct more wildlife crossings in the recently released 2025 Transportation Reinvestment Package. These life-saving passages that help wildlife safely move over- and under- roads can reduce crashes by as much as 95%.

Each year, over 7,000 wildlife-vehicle collisions are reported in Oregon - a likely dramatic undercount of actual collisions - and tragically, on average, four people die and 521 people are injured in those collisions. A recent study concluded that these collisions have a more than \$130 million annual impact on our state, resulting from property damage, medical bills and insurance claims and the value of lost wildlife. We've been making strides on constructing wildlife crossings in Oregon since 2019, but ODOT's nascent wildlife-vehicle collision reduction program has never had access to reliable annual funding to implement this good public policy.

In their July 2024 [Transportation Funding Needs](#) document, ODOT makes the case that in order to provide a proven solution to high rates of wildlife-vehicle collisions, that “[a]n investment of \$5 million per year would enable the construction of an additional 20 wildlife fencing and structure projects over the next 30 years.”

I strongly support this agency vision and firmly believes that this level of annual funding will provide the cornerstone to build upon Oregon's successful efforts in recent years to identify and safeguard wildlife movement corridors, establish life-saving wildlife crossing solutions, attract federal dollars and improve road safety for the benefit of motorists and wildlife alike.

I commend the legislature for its previous work addressing wildlife conservation, habitat fragmentation and WVCs, and we ask that it continue moving this important work forward by maintaining this vital funding to support ODOT's wildlife-vehicle collision reduction program within the 2025 Transportation Reinvestment Package as it moves forward in this legislative session.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

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