

Submitter: Venita Devine
On Behalf Of: Wildlife Crossing Funding
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation Reinvestment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2025

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Co-Vice Chairs Starr and Boshart Davis, and Members of the Committee,

Please support HB 2025 Sections 111 and 117. These sections would create the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Reduction Fund with an annual allocation of \$10 million per biennium.

Habitat loss and fragmentation hinder wildlife migration and dispersal, essential for their survival. Oregon's highways threaten many vulnerable wildlife species, leading to numerous animal deaths, including Pacific marten, wolves, and mule deer. Mule deer are the most frequently hit animal in Oregon, and their population has decreased by over 50% recently.

These collisions also have a serious human cost. ODOT reports over 7,000 collisions annually, causing more than 500 serious human injuries and four fatalities, the highest rate among West Coast states. Millions of dollars in damages result from these incidents. Wildlife crossings are effective; for example, the Lava Butte underpass on HWY 97 in central Oregon has reduced deer collisions by over 90%.

HB 2025 Sections 111 and 117 would advance previous legislative efforts to address wildlife connectivity loss and high wildlife-vehicle collision rates. Establishing and funding the "Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Reduction Fund" would significantly mitigate the safety and environmental consequences of habitat fragmentation. This initiative would also make Oregon, alongside Utah, one of the only states with annual funding for wildlife crossings.

I urge you to strongly consider passing this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Venita Devine

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