

# **Making Utah Roads Safer for People and Wildlife – Support Highway Mitigation/Wildlife Crossing RFA**

Collisions with wildlife on our roadways have serious consequences for people and wildlife. This Highway Mitigation Wildlife Crossing appropriation would invest \$20 million in targeted projects that reduce these collisions while connecting vital habitat for migrating wildlife. A win for wildlife and communities across Utah.



**Public Safety**

The U.S. Department of Transportation estimates that every year more than one million animal-vehicle collisions result in at least 200 human deaths and \$8 billion in damages. In 2021, the Utah Department of Transportation documented nearly 5,000 deer killed in vehicle collisions and over 1000 elk. Collisions with deer and other species result in damage, injuries, and even fatalities to the people driving. Accounting for such factors, wildlife-vehicle collisions are estimated to cost Utah taxpayers nearly \$138 million every year.<sup>i</sup>

## **Financial Savings**

With the annual cost associated with wildlife collisions estimated to exceed \$8 billion nationally, wildlife crossings are a wise investment. A new study estimates that accounting for vehicle repair, human injuries, fatalities and lost hunting value, total associated costs of a deer collision is \$19,089 and an elk collision is \$73,196 and a moose is \$110,397<sup>ii</sup>.



**Utah leading the way**

In 1975, the Utah Department of Transportation installed the first wildlife bridge in the nation on I-15 near the town of Beaver. Since then, over 50 wildlife crossings have been built across the state. Studies have demonstrated up to 90 percent fewer wildlife-vehicle collisions where there is a crossing structure and fencing to funnel animals to safe passage either over or under a roadway.

## **Leveraging Federal Funds**

The bipartisan infrastructure bill, signed into law last November, created a \$350 million Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program. Utah is in prime position to leverage these federal funds with new matching dollars. Now more than ever, it is important that Utah keeps pace with other western states.

## **Please support the Highway Mitigation/Wildlife Crossing RFA and invest in safer roads for people and wildlife**

<sup>i</sup> Patricia Cramer, Emanuel Vásquez, Allison Jones, IDENTIFICATION OF WILDLIFE-VEHICLE CONFLICT HOTSPOTS IN UTAH 2019

<sup>ii</sup> Marcel P. Huijser\*, John W. Duffield\*, Chris Neher\*, Anthony P. Clevenger\*& Terry McGuire\* Cost-Benefit Analyses of Mitigation Measures Along Highways for Large Animal Species.

September 13, 2022

Dear Governor Spencer Cox, Speaker Brad Wilson, Senate President Stuart Adams,

To ensure Utah continues its leadership in protecting and maintaining wildlife connectivity, we, the undersigned organizations, write to respectfully request funding of \$20 million dollars in the 2023 state of Utah budget to address wildlife-vehicle collisions. This investment will match federal funds apportioned in the Investment in Infrastructure & Jobs Act of 2021 to benefit Utah's wildlife, economy, and help keep our families safe.

In 2021, the Utah Department of Transportation documented nearly 5,000 deer killed in vehicle collisions. Collisions with deer and other species including elk, moose and black bears result in damage, injuries, and even fatalities to the people driving, and they significantly impact Utah's iconic wildlife populations. This is compounded by financial impacts, such as vehicle damage, medical expenses, and lost hunting opportunities. Accounting for such factors, wildlife-vehicle collisions are estimated to cost Utah taxpayers nearly \$100 million every year.

Utah has a long history of leadership in addressing this issue. Utah made history in 1975 when it completed the first wildlife overpass in the United States on Interstate 15 near Beaver. Since then, over 60 wildlife crossings have been built throughout the state. These projects have been highly successful, resulting in significant reductions in wildlife-vehicle collisions. Studies have demonstrated up to 90 percent fewer wildlife-vehicle collisions where there is a crossing structure and fencing to funnel animals to safe passage either over or under a roadway.

In 2020, the legislature unanimously passed HCR13. This legislation urged continued state investment in wildlife connectivity and urged local governments to adopt policies to protect and restore migration routes and promote road safety. This year, the legislature passed HB 427, which added efforts around "wildlife mitigation" to be included in UDOT's annual report to the legislature, which will create additional transparency around the agency's plans to mitigate wildlife-vehicle conflicts. Additionally, the legislature appropriated \$1 million to serve as match for federal funds to complete crossing infrastructure on I-84 between Mountain Green and Croydon.

While Utah has consistently demonstrated leadership in this field, other western states continue to raise the bar:

California – In 2021, California allocated \$105 million for wildlife crossings, including \$58 million for the Liberty Canyon crossing, which will be the largest wildlife crossing project in the world.

Colorado – SB22-151 Safe Crossings For Colorado Wildlife And Motorists (2022) created a dedicated fund to support wildlife crossings, including design, planning, conservation easements and staff. As introduced, the bill requested \$25 million, which represented 20 percent of the funding needed to implement the Colorado Department of Transportation's priority project list. The final bill included an initial investment of \$5 million into the fund.

New Mexico – SB 228 Wildlife Corridors Act (2019) directed New Mexico Department of Transportation and New Mexico Department of Game and Fish to develop a Wildlife Corridors Action Plan, which includes a list of priority safe passage projects. These projects are based on wildlife-vehicle collision

hotspots and habitat connectivity needs. In 2022, New Mexico's legislature appropriated \$2 million to implement priority safe passage projects.

Oregon – Oregon's Wildlife Corridor and Safe Road Crossing Act (2019) required the development of a Wildlife Corridors Action Plan. This plan includes opportunities to mitigate wildlife-vehicle collisions, and a list of areas for which land acquisitions or designations of wildlife corridors will protect wildlife movement or habitat connectivity. In 2022, Oregon spent \$7 million for the construction of wildlife crossings.

Wyoming – In 2019 Wyoming began issuing a Wildlife Conservation license plate. The specialty plate costs \$180 and has generated more than \$500,000 in revenue over its first 2.5 years. In 2022, Wyoming invested an additional \$75 million in the Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust Fund, which supports wildlife crossing projects. Additionally, in 2022, Wyoming's legislature appropriated \$10 million to leverage federal funding available for wildlife crossings.

Now more than ever, it is important that Utah continues its strong leadership on this issue. The Investment in Infrastructure & Jobs Act, signed into law last November, created a \$350 million Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program. This competitive grant program requires a 20 percent match, which means a \$15 million investment could leverage an additional \$60 million in federal transportation funding. With other western states already dedicating millions of dollars available for matching funds, Utah needs to act swiftly to ensure it is competitive when applying for this federal funding.

Thank you for considering this request.

Backcountry Hunters and Anglers

Boone and Crockett Club

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Fur Takers of America

Grand Staircase Escalante Partners

Mule Deer Foundation

Muley Fanatic Foundation

National Deer Association

National Wildlife Federation

Navajo Nation Department of Fish and Wildlife

Pew Charitable Trusts

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Safari Club International

Save People Save Wildlife

Save Our Canyons

Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Trout Unlimited

Utah Audubon Council

Utah Chapter of National Wild Turkey Federation

Utah Wildlife Federation

Utah Wild Sheep Foundation

Western Wildlife Conservancy

Wildlands Network

Wild Sheep Foundation

Potential Wildlife Conflict Reduction Projects

DWR REGION	UDOT Region	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION	Cost Estimate	Cost Estimate with 3 years inflation	Project Support Cost Assumptions	Priority Tier	Notes	UDOT 5-year plan	UDWR SO 3362 Action Plan Migratory priority list
SER	4	Highway 191 wildlife crossings and fencing	Install wildlife underpasses and fencing on Highway 191 (MP 72-89) north of Monticello. This area has one of the highest wildlife-vehicle collision rates in Utah.	\$7,907,000	\$9,564,000	Assumes 34 miles of fencing and one wildlife underpass similar to wildlife crossing at MP 36.7 on US-40	1			
SER	4	US-6 wildlife fencing maintenance	Repair and replace sections of existing wildlife fencing on US-6 (MP 202-240) between Soldier Summit and Price.	\$250,000	\$306,000	Assumes repair of 4000' of fence and replacement of 4000' of fence	1		Y	Y-US 6 Corridor
CR	3	US-189/SR-113 Junction wildlife fencing and overpass	Build overpass and install wildlife fencing to maintain habitat connectivity within the Wasatch range (topography and wetland presence precludes underpass option). No fencing will be necessary.	\$10,000,000	\$12,100,000	Based on a preliminary assessment that the project had done. They estimated between 6 to 8 million. Used 10 to account for lack of specifics on the estimate.	1			
NR	1	I-80/I-84 interchange wildlife fencing	Install wildlife fencing near the I-80/I-84 interchange in northern Utah. Retrofit fenced off rail bridge for wildlife, create wildlife underpass just north of Echo Junction on I-84	\$3,160,000	\$3,822,000	Wildlife underpass just north of Echo Junction on I-84	1		Y	Y-I-80/I-84
NER	3	Highway 40 wildlife crossings and fencing	Install wildlife underpass and fencing on Highway 40, east of finished reservoir fencing (MP 58 - 81)	\$9,393,000	\$11,363,000	Assumes 46 miles of fencing and one wildlife underpass similar to wildlife crossing at MP 36.7 on US-40	2		Y	
SER	4	Highway 491 wildlife crossings and fencing	Installing wildlife underpass and fencing on Highway 491 (MP 0.9-9-17) east of Monticello. This area has one of the highest wildlife-vehicle collision rates in Utah.	\$8,520,000	\$10,306,000	Assumes 34 miles of fencing and one wildlife underpass similar to wildlife crossing at MP 36.7 on US-40	2		Y	
CR	3	SR-132 wildlife crossings and fencing	Install wildlife crossings and fencing on SR-132 (MP 34-46)	\$6,132,000	\$7,418,000	Assumes 24 miles of fencing and one wildlife underpass similar to wildlife crossing at MP 36.7 on US-40	2			
CR	3	Highway 89 wildlife crossing and fencing	Installing wildlife crossings and fencing on Highway 89 (MP 264-272); potential for detection system	\$5,218,000	\$6,312,000	Assumes 16 miles of fencing and one wildlife underpass similar to wildlife crossing at MP 36.7 on US-40	2			Y-Paunsaugant
SR	4	I-15 wildlife fencing	Install 24 miles of wildlife fencing on I-15 to fill a gap between (MP 157-163.36 East Side & MP 157 to 175.8 West side) southern Utah near Fillmore.	\$4,984,000	\$6,030,000	Assumes installation of 12 cattle guards and 24 miles of wildlife fencing	2			
SR	4	Highway 89 wildlife fencing	Install 14.4 miles of wildlife fencing on Highway 89 (MP 48.6-55.8) in southern Utah near Kanab. The fencing will extend the existing wildlife fence and tie into cattle guards and crossing structures (requested 300,000 from NF-WF)	\$4,000,000	\$4,840,000	Assumes installation of 16 cattle guards and 14.4 miles of wildlife fencing	2			
SR	4	HWY 18 MP 12 to 40	High Migration Area. Truck route, High WVC area/hotspot, add detection system in meantime	\$17,533,000	\$21,209,000	Assumes installation of 80 cattle guards and 28 miles of wildlife fencing. Includes a detection system	2	Crosstiek cost estimate for SR-73: 270k. Remaining cost would be cost for mile for fencing and escape ramps		
CR	2	SR-248 wildlife fence maintenance	Repair and replace sections of existing wildlife fencing on SR-248 (MP 4-11)	\$509,000	\$617,000	Assumes repair of 12000' of fence and replacement of 12000' of fence	3			
SER	3	Highway 191 wildlife fencing	Fencing, double cattle guards, tie in with large underpasses at both ends (MP 364-368); continuing of existing projects	\$6,925,000	\$8,377,000	This section of roadway will be realigned in 2025. Estimate assumes two double cattle guards, 8 miles of fencing, and two wildlife large underpasses	3			
CR	3	SR-73 wildlife fencing and animal detection	Wildlife underpass for long-term solution in addition to existing fencing and detection	\$3,130,000	\$3,787,000	Assumes 1 mile of fencing and one wildlife underpass similar to wildlife crossing at MP 36.7 on US-40	3			
CR	3	Highway 80 between Echo Junction and Wyoming border	Wildlife fencing and escape ramps for 10 miles	\$3,152,000	\$3,813,000	Assumes 20 miles of fencing and wildlife escape ramps	3			