

September 8, 2025

U.S. Department of Transportation
Docket No. DOT-OST-2025-0468
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

To the Honorable Secretary Duffy,

This bipartisan collective of state legislators from across the country writes to underscore the importance of maintaining and strengthening federal transportation programs that reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve habitat connectivity across America's roadways.

We represent diverse regions and political perspectives, but we share a common responsibility: ensuring public safety, protecting taxpayer dollars, and supporting the economies and communities that depend on safe and reliable transportation networks. Wildlife-vehicle collisions threaten all three. Each year, these collisions cause more than 200 human deaths, 26,000 injuries, and over \$10 billion in costs nationwide—while also killing millions of animals (1).

Fortunately, research has shown that well-designed and well-sited wildlife crossings, combined with fencing, can reduce collisions by up to 97% (2). Their construction can also deliver substantial co-benefits, including job creation and local economic and private donor investment (3). By simultaneously supporting the preservation of wildlife populations, the crossings also support the preservation of hunting, fishing, and wildlife-watching opportunities that matter deeply to our constituents.

Over the last decade, red, blue, and purple states alike have overwhelmingly passed legislation directing their state departments of transportation to identify, prioritize, and construct wildlife crossings where they are needed most. When the current infrastructure law created and funded the \$350 million Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program (WCPP), states saw the largest increase of introduced and passed wildlife crossing-related legislation and appropriations (4). The federal funding provided by the WCPP also gave states without regulations the opportunity to voluntarily study, prioritize, and construct needed crossings (e.g., AZ, CT, ID, GA, KY, ME, MI, and MO). This shows that state investments were catalyzed by the creation of the new WCPP.

As this Administration considers what programs will bring better innovation and safety to our transportation system, we submit this bipartisan letter in support of the following policies and programs that will help our states to reduce dangerous and costly wildlife-vehicle collisions.

1. Reauthorize and Increase Funding for the Discretionary Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program.

Applications in the first two grant rounds far exceeded available dollars, demonstrating urgent demand from the states. Additional funding is necessary to meet this need, respond to inflation since 2021, and allow agencies an opportunity to apply again for the needed crossings they

have just identified through their statewide prioritization studies recently funded by this program (e.g. AZ, CT, GA, KY, MI, and MO).

The program should remain discretionary to preserve flexibility for agencies at different stages of project readiness. A move to formula funding would spread the already modest amount of funding across states with different levels of funding needs. Some states are still in the inexpensive study phase, while others are ready to act on multi-million-dollar, shovel-ready projects. Formula grants could not currently accommodate these diverse needs.

2. Maintain Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Reduction Measures as Eligible Expenses Across Federal Programs

Continuing to allow wildlife crossings as eligible expenses across a variety of transportation grant programs will give states and our communities flexibility to address this pressing safety issue (5).

3. Preserve Existing Bipartisan Reporting, Research, and Training Provisions.

Existing infrastructure law provisions related to the dispersal of Federal Highway Administration best practices for data collection, design standards, and workforce training have been, and will continue to be instrumental to ensuring that projects on the state level are effective and cost-efficient.

4. To the Extent Possible, Make Maintenance of Wildlife Infrastructure Eligible for Federal Funding

Federal-aid highway projects require eventual maintenance, yet the upkeep of wildlife crossings and fencing is currently ineligible and states must foot this bill. This fact can deter some states from pursuing these critical public safety projects. Making funding available for maintenance would extend the lifetime safety and fiscal benefits of these investments (6).

5. Allow Flexibility for Wildlife Infrastructure in Emergency Relief Projects.

When rebuilding after disasters, integrating wildlife infrastructure at the outset is more cost-effective and can improve long-term safety. Wildlife crossing underpasses created by enlarged culverts or bridges can also accommodate increased water flows, making the resulting infrastructure more resilient to future storms as well. The Department should encourage funding eligibility for crossings structures under Emergency Relief funding when the feature would come at a minimal additional expense, improve public safety and infrastructure resiliency, and not significantly delay community recovery.

As state legislators, we see the human, financial, and ecological costs of wildlife-vehicle collisions every day. We also see the extraordinary potential of wildlife crossings to save lives, save money, and sustain the outdoor heritage valued by our constituents. We thank the Department for its leadership on this issue and strongly encourage continued prioritization and integration of permanent wildlife-vehicle collision reduction programs within the U.S. Department of Transportation and within the Department's FY 26-30 Strategic Plan.

Respectfully,

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References:

1. M.P. Huijser et al., *Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Reduction Study: Report to Congress*, FHWA-HRT-08-034 (Fed. Highway Admin., Office of Safety Research & Dev., Aug. 2008) (on file with U.S. Dep't of Transp.); ARC Solutions, *Inaugural round of \$110 million in Wildlife Crossings Pilot funding marks landmark investment in solving a \$10 billion problem* (Dec. 5, 2023), <https://arc-solutions.org/article/inaugural-round-of-110-million-in-wildlife-crossings-pilot-funding-marks-landmark-investment-in-solving-a-10-billion-problem/>.
2. J.G. Woods, *Effectiveness of Fences and Underpasses on the Trans-Canada Highway and Their Impact on Ungulate Populations* (Report to Banff Nat'l Park Warden Serv., Banff, Alta., Can., 1990).
3. *Willard Springs Wildlife Overpass Pumps \$15.8 Million into Northern Arizona Economy*, Flagstaff Bus. News (July 8, 2025), <https://www.flagstaffbusinessnews.com/willard-springs-wildlife-overpass-pumps-15-8-million-into-northern-arizona-economy/>; The Wallis Annenberg Wildlife Crossing in Southern California was primarily constructed with private grant dollars, and a 2024 Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program Award was given to a Red Wolf Crossing Project in Coastal North Carolina, where a private anonymous pledge supported the majority of the required matching funds.
4. L. Christian & E. Sito, *State of the States: A Look at How Far U.S. State Habitat Connectivity Legislation Has Advanced and What Is Working* (Wildlands Network, May 2024), <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60b7e4e41506593f7f926fe7/t/6643a116b84aa32e721356ad/1715708201864/SoS+Master+Report+FINAL+5.14+1pm+EST.pdf>.

5. R. Callahan, M. Brocki & A. Keil, *Wildlife Infrastructure Funding Guide: Funding Opportunities within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (ARC Solutions et al., 2024), <https://arc-solutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Wildlife-Infrastructure-Funding-Guide.pdf> (for examples of existing federal programs that cover wildlife crossing expenses).

6. Programs to carry forward include the Best Practices Study and Report (23 U.S.C. § 172(a)); the Statewide Voluntary Transportation and Wildlife Action Plans (23 U.S.C. § 172(a)(3)(B)(iv)); the Workforce Development and Technical Training (23 U.S.C. § 172(b)); Collision and Carcass Data Methodology (23 U.S.C. § 172(c)); National Mitigation Threshold Guidance (23 U.S.C. § 172(d)); Wildlife Crossing Design Standards (23 U.S.C. § 109(c)(2)(F)); National Bridge and Tunnel Inventory and Inspection Standards (23 U.S.C. § 144(a)(2)(F), (b)(6), (i)(3)); National (49 U.S.C. § 70102(b)(12)); and State Freight Plans (49 U.S.C. § 70202(b)(16)).