



April 12th, 2021

Assembly Committee on Transportation
State Capitol, Room 112
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1189 (Bloom) - SUPPORT

Dear Honorable Chair Laura Friedman,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to you to express our support for AB 1189. This bill would remove the requirement of charging administrative indirect cost recovery fees by Caltrans towards wildlife crossing projects that have received over 50% of funding from private funding sources. This bill would incentivize the construction of wildlife crossings due to lower costs and encourage private investments in state infrastructure projects, while contributing to reducing habitat fragmentation, increasing biodiversity, reducing the frequency of fatal wildlife-vehicle collisions, and increasing the number of transportation jobs.

California's wildlife is facing an unprecedented extinction crisis and loss of habitat and fragmentation is one of the key drivers of this crisis. One-third of all American species are endangered or vulnerable to extinction and California contains 305 of those species, including San Joaquin kit foxes, California tiger

salamanders and desert tortoises.¹ Predator species are impacted the most as they require large territories to hunt, travel and migrate and, thus, are the first to be affected by the loss of habitat and fragmentation. Studies found that about 7,000 large wildlife-vehicle collisions happen per year in California as wildlife attempts to cross highways in search of food and mates.² Keystone species like the California mountain lion are especially affected as fragmentation has resulted in a significant decline in genetic diversity, so much so that populations of the cats in many areas of California may face extinction. Fragmentation is severely impacting California's biodiversity and our efforts to protect these animals from extinction, and wildlife crossings offer a great solution to the problem by providing a safe space for wildlife to cross from one habitat to another. States that have implemented wildlife crossings in recent years have found their wildlife-vehicle collision rates to decrease by 70%.³ Additionally, the current acceleration of wildfires, droughts, and extreme weather events has made the need for these crossings an urgent priority to allow for the safe movement of wildlife and improve the resiliency of flora and fauna to a changing climate.

Vehicle collisions with wildlife are not only dangerous to animals but to humans as well. The estimated cost of wildlife-vehicle collisions to Americans is more than \$8 billion annually. This cost includes both the costs of property damage and the injury or fatality caused to the driver.⁴ Wildlife-vehicle collisions are a public health hazard and should be treated as such.

AB 1189 proposes to address this problem by incentivizing the construction of more wildlife crossings. To do this, it utilizes language similar to SB 848 (2018). SB 848 passed the requirement that counties that were able to collect sales tax for transportation projects (Self-help Counties) had their Indirect Cost Recovery Program (ICRP) Administrative fees reduced to 10%.⁵ This incentivized Self-Help Counties to develop more transportation projects than in previous years due to the reduced financial cost. Similarly, AB 1189 proposes to waive ICRP fees for wildlife crossing projects that are able to fundraise more than half of the total cost through private funding. Currently, funding remains a big obstacle in developing wildlife crossings as private funders are more hesitant to donate to projects with high administrative costs or have restrictions that prohibit their funds from being used for planning. The development of more wildlife crossings will help protect our wildlife populations by providing a safe space to cross large roads, protect drivers from injury or vehicle damage caused by wildlife-vehicle collisions, and will also stimulate our economy by creating more transportation jobs. It has been found that for every \$1B spent on transportation projects, about 13,000 jobs are created.⁶ With our state emerging from a pandemic-caused economic depression, these jobs are needed now more than ever.

¹ Stein, B. A., N. Edelson, L. Anderson, J. Kanter, and J. Stemler. 2018. Reversing America's Wildlife Crisis: Securing the Future of Our Fish and Wildlife. Washington, DC: *National Wildlife Federation*.

https://www.nwf.org/-/media/Documents/PDFs/NWF-Reports/2018/Reversing-Americas-Wildlife-Crisis_2018.ashx?la=en&hash=B41BE77BAFA4252AA4C197233AB08AEBCC4613CC

² Shilling, F., Waetjen, D., Harrold, K., Farman, P. 2019. Impact of Wildlife-Vehicle Conflict on California Drivers and Animals, *Road Ecology Center UC Davis*.

[https://roadecology.ucdavis.edu/files/content/projects/2019%20WVC%20Report%20\(for%202018%20data\).pdf](https://roadecology.ucdavis.edu/files/content/projects/2019%20WVC%20Report%20(for%202018%20data).pdf)

³ Kintsch, J. Cramer, P. Singer, P. Cowardin, M. Wildlife, and Phelan, J. 2018. State Highway 9 Wildlife Crossings Monitoring – Year 2 Progress Report, *ECO-resolutions*. <https://www.codot.gov/programs/research/pdfs/2018-Research-Reports/2018-06>

⁴ Huijser, M. P., P. McGowen, J. Fuller, A. Hardy, A. Kociolek, A. P. Clevenger, D. Smith, and R. Ament. 2008. Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Reduction Study: Report to Congress. US Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. FHWA-HRT-08-034 254 pp.

<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/08034/exec.cfm#sec01>

⁵ Senate Bill 848, 2017-2018 Reg. Sess. (Cal. 2018).

https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB848

⁶ Employment Impacts of Highway Infrastructure Investment, *U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration*. <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/otps/pubs/impacts/>

Given the arguments provided above, we strongly encourage the Assembly Committee of Transportation to vote YES on AB 1189. This bill will help protect California's unique biodiversity, reduce the public health hazard caused by frequent vehicle collisions with wildlife, and create transportation jobs when it is most needed. We hope to have your support on this measure that will move forward California's public safety measures, economy, and environmental protections.

Signed,



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