



April 6, 2021

The Honorable Senator Lena Gonzalez
Chair, Senate Transportation Committee
State Capitol, Room 2209
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: SB 790 (Stern) – The Wildlife Movement and Protection Act – **SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Gonzalez,

The undersigned organizations are wildlife scientists, conservation organizations, local parks, and open space districts that advocate for the protection of the state’s biodiversity. We recognize the importance of natural, open spaces and the beneficial role they play for our wildlife and our communities.

We write in support of SB 790 (Stern), which would encourage the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to do proactive wildlife crossing projects that

prevent animals from being killed by vehicles. The bill would give the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) the authority to issue mitigation credits to Caltrans in exchange for those proactive projects.

A lack of safe crossings for wildlife lead to the deaths of charismatic megafauna such as mountain lion and black bear, but also impact populations of deer, American badger, and the California red-legged frog, among many others.

Wildlife crossings decrease incidents of fatal collisions by giving animals an alternate route to cross busy roads. A crossing is typically an underpass or an overpass that allows animals to cross from one side of the road to the other. Crossings allow for an increase in gene flow between small, fragmented wildlife populations and are important for maintaining biodiversity. Populations without this linkage are at a greater risk of inbreeding and local extinction. Climate-related environmental stressors amplify the need for habitat connectivity to facilitate species migration: as habitats change, animals need to access a wider range of latitudes and altitudes to find sufficient habitat, mates, and food.

SB 790 builds upon an existing memorandum of understanding between Caltrans and CDFW, which allowed for a mitigation credit agreement as part of an existing corridor project. The bill gives CDFW clear authority to provide Caltrans an incentive to retrofit existing highway infrastructure with wildlife passage features by issuing Caltrans compensatory mitigation credits that can be used for future projects requiring environmental mitigation.

We are proud to support this bill because it builds upon an already-working framework to ensure that wildlife, both large and small, is able to access adequate habitat to promote healthy wildlife populations across the state.

We respectfully urge your support for SB 790 when it is heard in your committee.

Sincerely,

Beth Pratt
Regional Executive Director, California
National Wildlife Federation

Dan Silver
Executive Director
Endangered Habitats League

Ann van Leer
Executive Director
Escondido Creek Conservancy

Ana M. Ruiz
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