

Wildlife Crossing

HB 2834 - ORS 366.162 Legislative Report

September 2026



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Executive Summary

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) submitted its first Wildlife Crossing Report in September 2024, outlining legislative investments that supported design and matching funds for a wildlife overcrossing on I-5 near the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, partnership work with the Burns Paiute Tribe via the Governor’s Regional Solutions Team, and the completion of wildlife fencing on the US 97 Gilchrist project.

Since then, ODOT has:

- Secured federal funding through the IJA Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program for Oregon’s first I-5 wildlife overcrossing.
- Continued collaboration with the Burns Paiute Tribe, with Regional Solutions Team completing their work in August-September 2026.
- Maintained monitoring partnerships with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and Oregon State University (OSU-Cascades) for US 97 crossing infrastructure.
- ODOT completed, with OSU-Cascades, a statewide prioritization study identifying top wildlife-vehicle conflict areas.
- Jointly applied with the Burns Paiute Tribe for congressional funding to support Regional Solutions Team recommendations.

During the 2025 legislative session, HB 2978 expanded ODOT–ODFW responsibilities to include:

- Promoting public safety in priority areas.
- Integrating wildlife standards into ODOT design guidance.
- Creating staff training on infrastructure–wildlife interactions.
- Jointly identifying priority collision-reduction projects.
- Consider and, to the maximum extent feasible, plan for and incorporate measures to promote the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation of impacts to wildlife corridor connectivity.
- Ensuring mitigation for projects affecting sensitive species.
- Establishing an advisory group for program support, fundraising, outreach, and assisting with identifying priority areas and priority projects.

Background

HB 2834 (2019) directed ODOT to develop a program by Dec. 31, 2023, to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions where ODFW-identified wildlife corridors intersect public roads. ORS 366.162 requires biennial reporting to the legislature on the number and types of wildlife passage projects and their safety benefits. ODOT must coordinate with ODFW during planning, engagement, and reporting.

ORS 366.162 requires reporting on:

- Wildlife corridor infrastructure completed or planned.
- The realized or expected effects on wildlife-vehicle collisions.

Completed Wildlife Passage Projects

ODOT did not construct new wildlife passage projects between 2024 and 2026.

I-5 Mariposa Preserve

On December 20, 2024, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) awarded \$125 million nationwide through the Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program (WCPP), including \$33.2 million for the Mariposa Preserve Wildlife Overcrossing on I-5 (Figure 1). Oregon's legislative match of \$3,779,900 strengthened the application. The project consists of a wildlife overpass and directional fencing serving a diversity of wildlife including deer, elk, bear, and cougars.

Oregon's congressional delegation secured release of funds on June 15, 2026. Exploratory drilling and final design will continue into 2027, with construction expected in 2028.



Figure 1. Rendering of the I-5 Mariposa wildlife overcrossing.

US 97 Monitoring

Since 2022, OSU-Cascades' Human and Ecosystem Resilience and Sustainability (HERS) Lab has monitored wildlife crossing structures at multiple US 97 locations. Monitoring was refined over time, including discontinuation at certain co-use underpasses. Wildlife guards in the Gilchrist, mile point 180 project were also evaluated.

A January 2024–June 2025 report found:

- 66.1% reduction in Elk & Deer Vehicle Collisions (EDVCs) near Lava Butte.
- 48.9% reduction in EDVCs near Gilchrist, mile point 180.

Monitoring along US 97 indicates that the projects have been effective at reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions. However, EDVCs remain more common at fence ends than within the fenced highway sections. Since the Gilchrist project was completed 10 years after the Lava Butte project, EDVCs are expected to continue declining as the project matures.

ODOT Research

ODOT and OSU-Cascades HERS Lab developed the Oregon Deer and Elk Crossing Prioritization Project (ODECPP), a science-based framework for prioritizing ungulate passage projects statewide. The tool integrates ecological, safety, and land-use data and provides a replicable model to guide future investments in wildlife-vehicle collision reduction.

Planned Wildlife Passage Projects

Hwy 20 – Juntura to Harper

On February 25, 2026, the Burns Paiute Tribe and ODOT applied for \$2 million in congressional directed funding to implement Oregon Solutions recommendations aimed at improving habitat connectivity and reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions between Harper and Juntura.

Hwy 20 – Bend to Suttle Lake

ODOT intends to apply for \$5.5 million from the FHWA WCPP in 2026. The required match will come from the non-profit organizations working in Oregon.

Grant Request: \$4,610,299

Matching Funds: \$889,701

Total Project Cost: \$5,500,000

The project will be for design of four wildlife overcrossings. Future funding will be sought for the construction of overcrossing and installation of exclusion fencing along this five-mile segment of Hwy 20 in the Deschutes National Forest, primarily serving mule deer and elk. Monitoring, maintenance, and research partnerships will be included.

US 97 – Vandever to USFS Boundary

On June 20, 2026, ODOT applied for a Federal Land Access Program (FLAP) grant to fund Phase II of the US 97 widening project between Vandever Drive and the USFS boundary in the Deschutes National Forest. The project includes at least one wildlife undercrossing designed to improve safe passage for mule deer and elk.

US 97 – MP 190 & Walker Rim

ODOT intends to scope these two ODOT priorities in late 2026 or early 2027.

Potential Funding Sources

State Funding Sources

- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
- Oregon Conservation & Recreation Fund
- Legislative appropriations, general fund, bonds, lottery funds
- State Highway Fund

HB 4134 – Beginning January 1, 2027, an increase in state lodging tax will fund nine conservation priorities. 0.05% of the increased lodging tax is specifically directed to ODFW to maintain and expand wildlife corridors.

Federal Funding Sources

- Federal Highway Formula Funds
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (SO 3362)
- ODFW Pittman-Robertson Funds
- USFS Federal Land Access Program
- America the Beautiful
- IJIA Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program

Private Funding Sources

- Oregon Wildlife Foundation
- Oregon Hunters Association
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Mule Deer Foundation
- Private foundations