

SB902_FAV_HSUS_cross.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: FAV



Date: April 2, 2024
Committee: House Environment and Transportation
RE: SB 902, Wildlife – Protections and Highway Crossings
Position: Support

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland members and supporters of the Humane Society of the United States, we offer our enthusiastic support of SB 902 requiring the DNR and the State Highway Administration to research wildlife populations and habitat and develop highway crossings for wildlife in the state. **We believe that the aggressive amendment work the sponsors have done on this bill alleviates the concerns around implementation, while creating a workable program that will allow Maryland to apply for time-limited grant funding to move forward on these important projects.**

Habitat loss and fragmentation pose an immediate and long-term threat to countless species. The U.S. human population is expected to grow to nearly 400 million by 2050, meaning more development, more deforestation and less wild and open spaces. Even lands remaining undeveloped will become increasingly fragmented by infrastructure developments. Roads, in particular, are a major mortality factor for wildlife populations residing in fragmented habitat.¹ Diminished habitats can also reduce food availability and increase conflicts with humans, pets and livestock.²

Developing safe wildlife road crossings as well as restoring and conserving critical habitat and wildlife corridors are critical to ensure wildlife are protected from increased human development and climate change. Road development and vehicle collisions with wildlife can be quite damaging to populations, especially those that are already small and fragile.³

While most (87 percent) animal-vehicle collisions in the United States involve deer, many other species are struck on roadways.⁴ Vehicle strikes are expensive to society. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (2008), the estimated average cost of a single animal-vehicle collision is \$6,126 per incident; that includes property damage, human injuries, or, more rarely, fatalities.⁵ The cost in today's dollars is likely much higher. For the years 2001-

¹ Maehr, D. S., M. J. Kelly, C. Bolgiano, T. Lester, and H. McGinnis. 2003. Eastern cougar recovery is linked to the Florida panther: Cardoza and Langlois revisited. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 31:849-853.

² Vickers, T. W., J. N. Sanchez, C. K. Johnson, S. A. Morrison, R. Botta, T. Smith, B. S. Cohen, P. R. Huber, H. B. Ernest, and W. M. Boyce. 2015. Survival and mortality of pumas (puma concolor) in a fragmented, urbanizing landscape. *PLOS One* 10.

³ Negri, S., and H. B. Quigley. 2010. Cougar Conservation. Pages 221-234 in M. C. Hornocker and S. Negri, editors. *Cougar: Ecology and Conservation*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London.

⁴ U.S. Department of Transportation. 2008. *Wildlife-Vehicle Reduction Study: Report to Congress*. <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/08034/08034.pdf>.

⁵ U.S. Department of Transportation. 2008.

2002, an estimated 26,647 injuries occurred as a result of animal-vehicle collisions.⁶ But those are not the only costs. Other losses include:

- The suffering and distress of injured animals
- The costs to rehabilitate animals, including X-rays and veterinary care by nonprofit organizations
- The loss of expenditures involved in conservation efforts for threatened or endangered species by governments and organizations
- The costs to municipalities of cleanup and disposal of tens of thousands of animal carcasses
- The loss to businesses from loss of transportation, lodging and meal costs that would have been spent by wildlife recreationists of all types
- The emotional distress of people involved in accidents
- The cultural losses to Native Americans and groups such as wildlife watchers and advocates⁷

The mitigated costs from reduced vehicle collisions and the subsequent reduction in injury to humans and wildlife should also be a factor when cost is considered. Wildlife crossing structures, such as road overpasses and underpasses, including drainage culverts, can reduce the injury and death of wildlife as well as human drivers and vehicle passengers.⁸ Additionally, while highway overpasses and underpasses can be expensive, building their creation into the design of new roads can save significant future costs. Using existing structures, such as culverts and tunnels, can reduce costs to the development of safe passages.⁹

For the reasons stated above, we ask that the committee approve SB 902 to research and develop critical wildlife crossings in our state. Thank you for your consideration of this measure that will save countless lives in the great state of Maryland.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bevan-Dangel
Maryland State Director
jbevandangel@humanesociety.org

⁶ U.S. Department of Transportation. 2008.

⁷ U.S. Department of Transportation. 2008.

⁸ Clevenger, A. P., B. Chruszcz, and K. Gunson. 2001. Drainage culverts as habitat linkages and factors affecting passage by mammals. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 38:1340-1349; Ng, S. J., J. W. Dole, R. M. Sauvajot, S. P. D. Riley, and T. J. Valone. 2004. Use of highway undercrossings by wildlife in southern California. *Biological Conservation* 115:499-507.

⁹ See e.g., Ng, S. J., J. W. Dole, R. M. Sauvajot, S. P. D. Riley, and T. J. Valone. 2004. Use of highway undercrossings by wildlife in southern California. *Biological Conservation* 115:499-507.

Wildlife – Protections and Highway Crossings - SB

Uploaded by: Lisa Radov

Position: FAV



MARYLAND VOTES FOR ANIMALS

PO Box 10411
BALTIMORE, MD 21209

April 2, 2024

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee
From: Lisa Radov, President and Chair, Maryland Votes for Animals, Inc.
Re: Wildlife – Protections and Highway Crossings– SB 902 – Support

Chair Korman, Vice - Chair Boyce, members of the Environment and Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Lisa Radov. I am the President and Chair of Maryland Votes for Animals. We champion humane legislation to improve the lives of animals in Maryland. Speaking for Maryland Votes for Animals, our Board of Directors, and our members across Maryland, I respectfully request that the Environment and Transportation Committee vote favorably for Wildlife – Protections and Highway Crossings – SB 902.

This bill requires the Department of Natural Resources, in collaboration with the State Highway Administration, to identify and prioritize certain species whose habitat or movement corridors intersect with State highways and develop tools, technology, and techniques to identify certain State highway infrastructure locations. It requires the Department of Natural Resources to take certain actions regarding a statewide deer population survey on or before November 1, 2024 and June 30, 2026, and to collaborate with automobile insurance providers to remit a fee to the Fund.

Vehicle collisions with wildlife on the nation's roads claim the lives of millions of animals and kill or injure tens of thousands of people each year. According to the Pew Charitable Trust, a wildlife crossing along State Highway 9 in Colorado reduced such collisions by 90% from 2015 to 2020. In Oregon, a wildlife crossing on U.S. 97 near Lava Butte decreased collisions by roughly 85% during a 2015-17 monitoring period.

Animals are moving and shifting their migration patterns as they adapt to climate change. Research and technology have made it possible to target the best places for wildlife crossings so that they can most effectively benefit wildlife and motorists. It is time for Maryland to utilize these existing tools to coordinate efforts between the Maryland State Highway Administration and the Department of Natural Resources to protect Maryland's wildlife and drivers.

Maryland's wildlife and motorists are depending on us!

In closing, I would like to thank Senator Lewis Young for her sponsorship of SB 902 and ask the committee for a favorable report.

SB_902_FAV_LateTestimony_MarkConway_ChesapeakeCons

Uploaded by: Mark Conway

Position: FAV

April 2, 2024

Delegate Marc Korman
Maryland House of Delegates
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Delegate Regina T. Boyce
Maryland House of Delegates
251 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Delegates Korman, Boyce and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

On behalf of Chesapeake Conservancy, I write to urge your support for the Wildlife - Protections and Road Crossings (SB 0902) sponsored by Senator Lewis Young and to move this bill favorably from committee.

SB 0902 is a critical step in mitigating one of the biggest threats to our wildlife here in Maryland. While the focus of the Chesapeake Conservancy is most often that of protecting critical habitat, preserving sites of historical and cultural significance, and providing access to our treasured Chesapeake Bay for all; reducing the impact of roads will expand our shared conservation mission to disturbed areas that would otherwise continue to degrade and become less biodiverse over time. We believe this creates a unique opportunity to help enact positive change in many places where our residents live, enjoy, and travel through. Habitat fragmentation and road mortality can be the sole cause of a local wildlife population to blink out. Even if not a protected or rare species that may be disappearing from the wider landscape or even nationwide, many populations represent both an important ecological value as well as that of a unique natural heritage for a community. So many of these places may otherwise lose a particular species locally for future generations to enjoy if habitat is not connected or threats from roads reduced.

We have ambitious goals which include our support for the creation of a National Recreation Area here in the Chesapeake watershed as well as conserving 30% of the land by 2030. However, these bold initiatives do not sufficiently address the fact that so much of our beautiful state is already developed with fragments of habitat and pockets of important wildlife populations still embedded within areas where roadways present a major impediment to their survival. SB 0902 allows the state to change course for those still special places that shoulder the impact that comes from more diverse uses, allowing our population to strike a more significant equilibrium.

In many cases just considering wildlife and its need to retain connectivity between habitat areas when designing our infrastructure can provide an immense benefit to those populations. We are fortunate that a wealth of case studies from across the world already exist, with many modern engineering elements having proven to be highly effective in protecting wildlife from harm associated with roadways. By supporting the best, up-to-date research, we can bolster the understanding of behavior for impacted species such as migration patterns, habitat use, population densities, and natural history as it pertains to road impact. This will allow for precise and more cost effective actions. By strengthening and properly funding the working relationships between responsible agencies, many choices made in designs of new infrastructure and the repairs of existing can mitigate the destruction of wildlife populations with improved efficiency and measurable metrics.

Roads also present a hazard for our population as wildlife collisions are numerous and sometimes quite dangerous for vehicle operators. There is also the less discussed weight of seeing constant, unnecessary loss of wildlife on roads presents a significant mental health toll on many members of our communities who feel hopeless to loss of the natural world around us. This bill can show that we not only have compassion and awareness for the problem but that we will act now to prevent further destruction and even restore populations before it is too late.

This bill is a rare opportunity to correct the actions of the past while also setting forth a new vision for how to coexist with some of our most treasured inhabitants of Maryland without sacrificing the necessary progress required to support our growing state.

Thank you for considering my testimony, I urge your support for SB 0902.

Submitted by Mark Conway
Executive Vice President of External Affairs
Chesapeake Conservancy

SB 902 Wildlife - Protections and Highway Crossing

Uploaded by: Michelle Dietz

Position: FAV

Tuesday, April 2, 2024

TO: Marc Korman, Chair of the House Environment and Transportation Committee, and Committee Members

FROM: Michelle Dietz, The Nature Conservancy, Director of Government Relations; Cait Kerr, The Nature Conservancy, State Policy Manager

POSITION: Support SB 902 Wildlife - Protections and Highway Crossings

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports SB 902 offered by Senator Lewis Young. SB 902 will encourage the State Highway Administration and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to collaboratively identify opportunity areas for incorporating wildlife passage features into transportation projects. This will reduce road impacts on imperiled species and reduce wildlife vehicle collision risks for motorists. The bill seeks to create a Wildlife Highway Crossings Fund to support wildlife crossing projects and the research needed to determine the most strategic locations for crossings. Agencies can use these grant funds to support administrative costs for activities outlined in this bill. It also requires the State Highway Administration to coordinate with DNR and apply for relevant federal funding opportunities for highway crossing projects. By addressing the high number of animal-vehicle collisions, SB 902 moves Maryland toward a safer future for both people and wildlife

Many species in Maryland can benefit from less expensive wildlife crossing underpasses, often built using existing structures like culverts and bridges. Virginia has already seen the benefits of underpasses – by monitoring wildlife-vehicle collisions before and after erecting directional fencing to funnel deer to culverts along I-64, deer-vehicle collisions in the area fell by an average of 92% after the fencing was installed. In just 1.8 years, the benefits of these culverts with exclusionary fencing exceeded the costs of fencing, with an average savings of \$2.3 million per site.

The section of the Appalachians running through West Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania is a critical corridor for species migrating in response to climate change. This section, known as the Allegheny Front, is a priority landscape to preserve the rich biodiversity of the larger Appalachian range as climate change drives species to move and adapt. Serving as a habitat bridge between vast conservation lands in the southern and northern Appalachians, the Allegheny Front plays a critical role in keeping this continental ecosystem connected. By providing safe passage across roadways, we can better protect migratory species traveling through this important corridor.

The precipitous decline in biodiversity is a global challenge, it is jeopardizing food and water supplies and undermining global, social and economic stability – we must all do our part to find solutions that safeguard biodiversity. TNC commends Senator Lewis Young on introducing this bill, which aims to protect Maryland's rich biodiversity, while also reducing wildlife collisions' safety and economic impacts on our roadways.

Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 902.

240329_SB902_Wildlife – Protections and Highway Cr

Uploaded by: Sarah Roth

Position: FAV



March 29, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment and Transportation
Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
The Honorable Regina T. Boyce

Vice Chair, Environment and Transportation
Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Korman and Vice Chair Boyce,

I stand with my friend, Senator Karen Lewis Young, and would like to express my support for *Senate Bill 902 - Wildlife – Protections and Highway Crossings*.

While hard estimates are extremely difficult to calculate, in Maryland, approximately 33,000 animal-vehicle collisions (AVCs) occur every year. The human cost of these collisions results in about 200 preventable deaths a year, \$198 million of insurance claims, and \$8.5 million in State costs to respond, investigate, and clean up the thousands of AVCs that occur annually. There are also immeasurable human costs associated with the long-lasting emotional and physical effects of dealing with the aftermath of an AVC, especially when a fatality occurs.

SB902 addresses the high rate of animal-vehicle collisions (AVC) in Maryland by increasing safety for people and wildlife alike. Specifically, this bill 1) compels the State Department of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources to work together and identify optimal locations for the integration of wildlife passage components into new and maintenance transportation projects, 2) permits the State Highway Administration (SHA) to coordinate with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to apply for relevant federal funding opportunities for highway crossings, and 3) creates a voluntary Wildlife Highway Crossing Fund to support wildlife crossing.

Please be aware that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (IIJA) authorized \$350 million in total funding for Federal Fiscal Years 2022 through 2026 to the Federal Highway Administration's Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program (WCPP). This is a competitive federal grant program, which has the goal of "*reducing Wildlife Vehicle Collisions (WVCs) while improving habitat connectivity for terrestrial and aquatic species.*" As the federal representative for Maryland's Sixth

Congressional District, and a member of the US House of Representatives Appropriations Committee, I stand by ready to assist SHA and DNR, should they choose to apply for this available funding.

I urge you to give the highest consideration to *Senate Bill 902 - Wildlife – Protections and Highway Crossings*.

Thank you for your time and attention to this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Trone". The signature is stylized and cursive.

David Trone
Member of Congress

SB902 Wildlife Crossings Cover Letter (House writt

Uploaded by: Senator Karen Lewis Young

Position: FAV

KAREN LEWIS YOUNG
Legislative District 3
Frederick County

Committee on Education, Energy,
and the Environment



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410-841-3575 · 301-858-3575
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Karen.Young@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

The Honorable Delegate Korman, Chair
The Honorable Delegate Boyce, Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
Maryland Senate
Annapolis, MD

April 2nd, 2024

Testimony in Support of SB902: Wildlife – Protections and Highway Crossings

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and honorable members of this committee,

SB902 is the crossfile of HB1129 and comes to you in a substantially similar posture. A friendly amendment was offered on the Senate floor to require the Maryland Insurance Commissioner to conduct a study on the effects of animal-vehicle collisions, or AVC, have on private insurance premiums. All other amendments are identical to those offered by Delegate Ruth on HB1129.

Animal-vehicle collisions are enormously expensive. In Maryland, there are approximately 33,000 AVC each year. The average insurance cost for each claim is \$6,343¹, for a collective annual cost of about \$198,000,000. Please note this information was provided by State Farm — the costs are likely even higher when considering all insurer’s data. There are also costs directly to the state, such as accident attendance by emergency personnel, investigation, and carcass removal and disposal — about \$260² per AVC, or \$8,580,000 annually. There are also the long-lasting emotional and physical costs of being involved in an AVC, or the 200³ preventable deaths AVC causes annually. Furthermore, the cost of AVCs are growing. The average cost of a claim for an animal-vehicle collision was \$3,972 in 2018, increasing to \$6,343 in 2022 — about a 60% increase in just four years.⁴

SB902 addresses the high rate of animal-vehicle collisions (AVC) by increasing safety for people and wildlife alike. Specifically, this bill would:

1. Compel the State Department of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources to work together and identify optimal locations for the integration of wildlife passage components into new and maintenance transportation projects.
2. Permit the State Highway Administration to coordinate with the Department of Natural Resources and apply for relevant federal funding opportunities for highway crossings.

¹ Hubbard, Lucy. “Fall Deer Season Increases Drivers’ Risk of Animal Collisions.” *CNS Maryland*, CNS Maryland, 20 Oct. 2023, cnsmaryland.org/2023/10/18/fall-deer-season-increases-drivers-risk-of-animal-collisions/.

² Huijser, M.P.; Duffield, J. W.; Clevenger, A.P.; Ament, R.J.; McGowen, P.T. 2009. “Cost-benefit analyses of mitigation measures aimed at reducing collisions with large ungulates in North America: a decision support tool.” *Ecology and Society*. 14(2): 15. www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss2/art15/ ES-2009-3000.pdf. Price adjusted for inflation.

³ Ament, R.; Jacobson, S.; Callahan, R.; Brocki, M., eds. 2021. “Highway crossing structures for wildlife: opportunities for improving driver and animal safety.” Gen. Tech. Rep. PSW-GTR-271. Albany, CA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station. 51 p.

https://www.fs.usda.gov/psw/publications/documents/psw_gtr271/psw_gtr271_007.pdf

⁴ Hubbard 2023

3. Create a voluntary Wildlife Highway Crossing Fund to support wildlife crossing projects and the research necessary to identify the most strategic locations for crossings.

Wildlife crossings are exceptionally effective. When properly utilized, wildlife crossings reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions by up to 90%.⁵

The composition of wildlife crossings encompass a variety of structures that are designed or retrofitted to provide safe passage for wildlife above or below a highway. Although wildlife crossing structures do not have standardized designs, they can be categorized as two major types: overpasses and underpasses. Overpasses are traffic-spanning bridges that link habitats by allowing for the movement of a wide range of wildlife, including large mammals. A wildlife underpass is a passage below a roadway in the form of either a bridge or a culvert. Existing bridges and culverts can be replaced or retrofitted to enhance passage by terrestrial or semiaquatic species. The use of fencing alongside these measures ensures that animals are aware of and using the crossings by preventing them from crossing elsewhere nearby.

In 2020, Virginia passed legislation to create a Wildlife Corridor Action Plan. In 2021, they passed additional legislation creating a comprehensive program to identify wildlife corridors, protect motorists from collisions with animals, and address barriers to wildlife movement. The bill passed with strong bipartisan support. Since passing this legislation, the state received \$604,318 in federal fundings from a single grant provided by the Federal Highway Administration's Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program.

Federal Highway Administration's Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program is a fund of \$350 million dollars, which can be used not only for construction but also for designing mapping tools, tracking wildlife, and research. Virginia's application was for the express purpose of prioritizing wildlife crossing locations by researching roads with the highest risk of large animal collisions. However, the amount awarded is tied to the scope of the project. Arizona, for example, received \$23,992,588 for overpass construction.

Maryland has the third highest deer population in the country. A study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that Frederick and Howard Counties ranked sixth and tenth nationwide in deer-related collisions between 2006 and 2018. Arizona, who received the largest federal award amount in the 2022-2023 fiscal year, ranks 30 states below Maryland in frequency of these collisions. This bill would provide Maryland the opportunity to receive the federal funding we deserve.

We know this can work in Maryland. A wildlife passage project for Maryland's Inter- County Connector (connecting Montgomery and Prince George's Counties) includes "bottomless arches" that span streams and natural passages.⁶ Post-construction monitoring of the bottomless arches indicates that efforts to support fish populations and passage have been successful. Heavy use by deer, raccoons, opossums, squirrels, turtles, and foxes has been documented.

Wildlife highway crossings are a proven solution that not only reduces wildlife mortality, but also improves driver safety, avoids costly accidents, and keeps traffic flowing. Wildlife crossings can reduce habitat fragmentation and improve landscape connectivity to support animal movements and the ecological processes and services that humans rely upon. These include pollination, free-flowing water,

⁵ "Joint Statement Regarding Climate-Informed Wildlife Crossings." *ARC Partnership*, 2023, <https://arc-solutions.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Climate-and-Crossings-Consensus-Statement-232023-1.pdf>.

⁶ Karen Russell, "Wildlife Corridors in Frederick County: Conserving Nature in Maryland's Appalachian Heart." *Climate Change Working Group of Frederick County*, 2023. <https://catocinlandtrust.org/wildlife-corridors-in-frederick-county/>

and recreational opportunities like hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching. To save lives and money, I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Lewis Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Karen Lewis Young

SB0902OPPOSE.pdf

Uploaded by: Peggy Williams

Position: UNF

SB0902 OPPOSE

Dear Committee Members:

I oppose SB0902. I understand the desire to allow animals to roam more freely without being struck by vehicular traffic, as well as the driver safety concerns. However, I think that at this point, it seems impracticable at this time to implement this since you will construct crossovers and the wildlife may not even use it; and there is no dedicated funding source or a funding process for paying for any of the construction even with grants that the federal government may provide.

Perhaps after the funding plan is in place and has been widely agreed to by your constituents, this bill may make sense. I had my own collision with a large buck which totalled my own vehicle. But the incident occurred in slow-moving traffic as I was approaching an intersection in the middle of downtown Rockville Md, near the county council building. Even if you have DNR do a study to tell you where the best locations for crossover features are, it likely would not have helped my situation. I love animals and nature. But deer-culling operations should also be considered to control that particular population.

Peggy Williams
Severna Park
D31

SB0902_DNR_INFO_ENT_4-2-24.pdf

Uploaded by: Dylan Behler

Position: INFO



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

April 2, 2024

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 902 - Third Reader

SHORT TITLE: Wildlife – Protections and Highway Crossings

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION

The Department provides this letter of information on this legislation. The Department appreciates the sponsors intent to mitigate wildlife and vehicular interactions all while also protecting wildlife through biological sound crossing. However, this bill would require the Department to accomplish a series of tasks and take on additional duties and without necessary funding to accomplish the requirements of the legislation.

We appreciate the sponsors of this legislation having a continuous dialogue with the Department, and will continue to determine how to take necessary action to mitigate wildlife and vehicular interactions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Wildlife interactions with traffic are an important issue in Maryland. Automobile strikes with large animals are a source of physical danger and economic hardship for Maryland citizens. Automobile strikes of rare, Threatened and Endangered species can have detrimental impacts upon animal populations and conservation initiatives. Roads can serve to fragment habitats and isolate wildlife populations or to limit access to nesting or migrating areas.

BILL EXPLANATION

Senate Bill 902 would take a holistic approach to wildlife interaction with road networks and automobiles by creating a funding source for mitigating the negative effects of both collisions and habitat fragmentation by:

- Developing technology to mitigate wildlife interactions with automobiles.
- Creating a state-wide deer monitoring and management system.
- Building wildlife-friendly road crossing structures, connection infrastructure, and exclusion devices.
- Maintaining wildlife crossing structures.
- Providing a grant fund for local governments to install and operate mitigative wildlife crossing structures.
- Requiring enhanced interaction between the Departments of Natural Resources and Transportation.

Contact: Dylan Behler, Director, Legislative and Constituent Services
dylan.behler@maryland.gov ♦ 410-260-8113 (office) ♦ 443-924-0891 (cell)

SB0902 - SHA - Wildlife Crossings _LOI_FINAL_CO.pdf

Uploaded by: Pilar Helm

Position: INFO

April 2, 2024

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee
251 House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

RE: Letter of Information – Senate Bill 902 – Wildlife Protections and Highway Crossings

Dear Chair Korman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) offers the following information on Senate Bill 902 for the Committee’s consideration.

As amended, Senate Bill 902 requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the State Highway Administration (SHA) to collaborate on various tasks related to wildlife-vehicle interactions, including highway crossings and collision avoidance. Of note, the amended bill requires SHA to develop design guidelines for bridges, culverts, and roads aimed at improving passage for endangered species, threatened species, and Species of Greatest Conservation Need on or before June 30, 2026. DNR would prioritize certain species for connecting habitats or preventing collisions between vehicles and wildlife. On completion of the design guidelines, SHA shall consider the guidelines and may consult with DNR on the design, rehabilitation, or replacement of bridges, culverts, or State highways that intersect the habitat of one of these species.

MDOT and SHA thank the sponsors of this bill and its cross file – House Bill 1129 – for working with the Department on revised language and for considering SHA’s comments on the implementation of specific design elements in SHA infrastructure. SHA believes the revised language aligns SHA’s practices with the sponsors’ intent and appreciates that the bill requires consideration of relevant safety standards, engineering best practices, and the reasonableness and feasibility of implementing design elements. Finally, SHA thanks the sponsors for changes to clarify the application of this bill – as amended, the bill will not apply to a project that has an existing National Environmental Policy Act Record of Decision and for which the design of the project is more than 30% complete before the effective date of the bill, helping to limit changes to projects that have already achieved significant design milestones.

SHA continues to prioritize practices that enhance endangered species projects and reduce wildlife related crashes. Presently, SHA is researching practices from other states and evaluating potential funding sources to support the State’s efforts, including federal grant opportunities. The Maryland Department of Transportation respectfully requests the Committee consider this information when deliberating Senate Bill 902.

Sincerely,

Matthew Mickler
Director
Office of Government Affairs
Maryland State Highway Administration
410-545-5629

Pilar Helm
Director
Office of Government Affairs
Maryland Department of Transportation
410-865-1090