



Saving the Chesapeake's Great Rivers and Special Places

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Date: February 28, 2025

Bill Number: **SB 635 - Wildlife - Protections and Highway Crossings**

Committee: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment

Position: Support

Chairman Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

Chesapeake Conservancy supports SB 635 - Wildlife - Protections and Highway Crossings, for the purpose of developing systems and processes to prevent or reduce collisions between humans and that of threatened species, endangered species, and species of the greatest conservation need.

This bill establishes a Maryland Connectivity Coalition that will help guide the targeted investments of the newly created "Wildlife Connectivity Fund" – under the auspices of the Maryland State Highway Administration. The coalition will develop performance metrics to evaluate the success of funded projects.

Projects will be focused along roadways where a high number of vehicle and wildlife collisions occur and may include things like the construction of exclusionary fencing, barriers, or other crossings to help connect wildlife with nourishment, potential mates, and suitable habitat. The fund may include money appropriated in the State budget, interest earnings from the fund, or other monies from other sources to benefit the fund.

This bill could be strengthened with greater clarity as to how charter counties shall consider wildlife movement and habitat connectivity, when adopting, amending, or executing local planning.

Overall, we greatly appreciate the desire to connect greater habitat and prevent further degradation of biodiversity within the state and Chesapeake Bay watershed.

We thank you for your service and for all that you do to increase the conservation and restoration of Maryland's natural and cultural resources.

For further information, please contact Mark Conway, Executive Vice President of External Affairs, at MConway@ChesapeakeConservancy.org or 443-321-3610.

We respectfully urge a favorable committee report.