

Funding needed to save lives on Highway 97



A total of \$18 million will prevent more than 244 vehicle-deer collisions per year in north-central Washington.

Between Riverside and Tonasket more than 350 vehicle-deer collisions occur every year in just 12.5 miles of Highway 97. Medical costs, car repairs, Washington State Patrol and Sheriff's Department response, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) clean-up crews, and the value of the deer all add up to approximately \$6,500 per accident, costing the public more than \$2.5 million every year.

Using more than \$260,000 in funds donated by concerned citizens around the state, in 2019 and 2020 Conservation Northwest, the Mule Deer Foundation and the Colville Confederated Tribes began to address this urgent issue—renovating Janis Bridge to serve as a wildlife undercrossing and installing the first mile of deer fencing along Highway 97 south of the bridge to the intersection with Highway 7.

In the year since completion, trail cameras have recorded thousands of pictures of animals using the new undercrossing to avoid dangerous collisions with motorists, including numerous herds of mule deer, cougars, bobcats and other species. But state funding is needed to complete the Safe Passage 97 project.

This solution has broad local and regional support, and needs to be continued another 11 miles to reduce accidents and the loss of animal life. Using pre-design scoping documents prepared by WSDOT, \$18 million is needed to continue fencing, necessary cattle-guards, gates, deer escapes and six wildlife underpasses to prevent an additional 244 vehicle-animal collisions per year. We are asking that this amount be included in the next large multi-year transportation package being negotiated during the 2021 legislative session.

Installing these underpasses and associated infrastructure will help farm workers, truckers, Tribal members, local commuters, tourists and hunters stay safe, save money, and preserve mule deer for the benefit of both human and natural communities. Safe Passage 97 will also allow other wildlife species to adapt to a changing climate by preserving an essential migration corridor between the Cascades and Rocky Mountains.



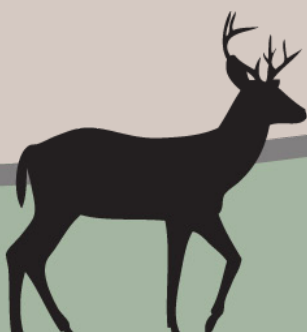
Three mule deer does crossing safely under Janis Bridge

Highway 97 wildlife undercrossings have strong support from:

- County Commissioners
- local legislators
- City of Omak
- WSDOT
- Colville Confederated Tribes
- Mule Deer Foundation
- Conservation Northwest
- Okanogan Tourism Council
- Trucking Association
- Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board
- Okanogan Land Trust
- National Wildlife Federation
- Canasol Farms
- Central Washington Latino Community Fund
- Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

Together, we can make safer passage on Highway 97 a reality.

Learn more at safepassage97.org
or okanoganwildlifecrossing.org



SAFE PASSAGE FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE 97



Mule deer roadkill on Highway 97 within the project area

A CONCERNED COMMUNITY

Okanogan County citizens, WSDOT, Conservation Northwest, the Okanogan Trails Mule Deer Foundation Chapter and others are looking for a solution to reduce animal-vehicle collisions along Highway 97. The stretch of highway between Riverside and Tonasket is an important north-south commuting route and freight corridor. This area is also an important travel route and habitat for mule deer. The combination of vehicles and deer results in an epidemic of roadkill and vehicular accidents.

Washington state has adopted Target Zero—a goal to reduce human fatalities and serious injuries on Washington’s roadways to zero by the year 2030. Their goal is zero deaths and serious injuries, because every life counts.

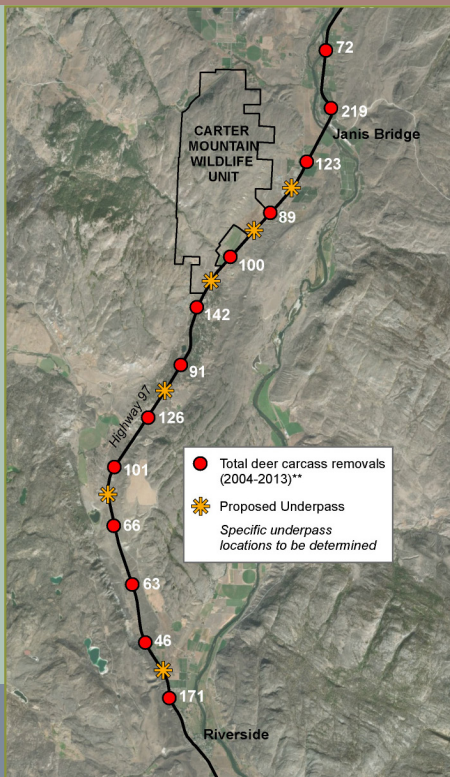
GOING UNDER

Currently, the Washington State Department of Transportation proposes that the most effective way to reduce deer-vehicle collisions in this high-collision highway segment is through the construction of roadside fencing with associated undercrossings. Fencing at some level may be necessary to direct wildlife to these new undercrossing, but will be included based on monitoring.



Visual simulation of a potential undercrossing in the project area
credit: Jones and Jones Architecture

MAP OF PROJECT AREA

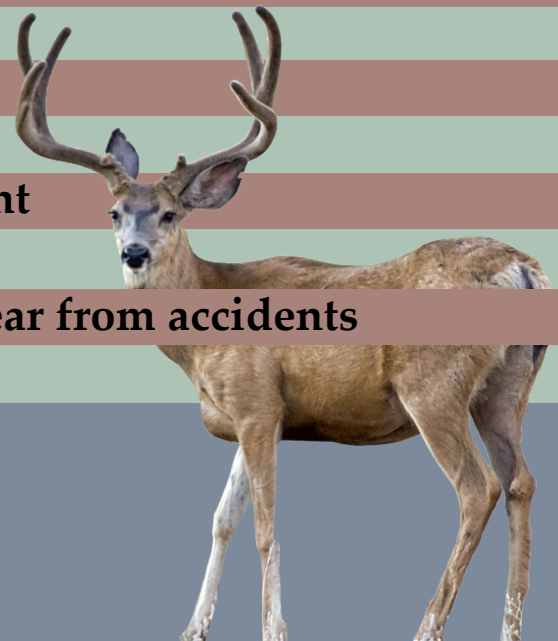


350 deer hit per year*

12.5 miles

\$6,500 per incident

\$2.28 million a year from accidents



*Estimate Source: Washington State Department of Transportation, all estimates are approximate.
**Deer estimated at 3X the amount hit and removed by WSDOT