



**Colville Confederated Tribes
Fish and Wildlife Department**

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September 4th, 2018

To: Roger Millar
Secretary of Transportation
Washington State Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 47300
Olympia, Washington 98504-7300

Subject: Highway 97 Underpass Support

I am writing this letter in support of the Safe Passage on Highway 97 Project. The Colville Tribe supports projects that are designed to enhance, restore and protect natural resources on and off the Reservation.

As active managers of our natural resources we value working with communities and organizations on landscape level projects that contribute to the recovery and protection of wildlife populations and other natural resources. The Safe Passage on Highway 97 Project is proposed on lands that not only fall on Tribal property but also include lands that are within our usual and accustomed areas.

The Washington Department of Transportation has identified the stretch of Highway 97 between Crumbacher and the Janis Bridge south of Tonasket as one of the highest car deer collision zones in the state. This 12 mile stretch of highway has over 350 vehicle-deer collisions each year. Our Tribal resource managers agree that this is a major issue not only for public safety but also for wildlife. The Tribe supports this project as it addresses the safety of motorists and protects the lives of deer and other wildlife species that utilize this area to meet their habitat needs.

As a partner of the Safe Passage on Highway 97 Project we support the construction, operation and monitoring of wildlife underpasses that will be completed as part of this proposal. Phase one of the proposal identifies an area on Highway 97 that is bordered by the Tribal Sherrard property on the east and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife on the west as the primary location for an underpass and its associated fencing and gates. The Colville Tribe approved a Land Management Plan for the Tribal Sherrard property that identified wildlife resource protection as a high priority. The construction and implementation of wildlife underpasses is in line with the goals and objectives of that plan. We understand that in Phase 2 and potentially in Phase 1 other areas may be used for addition underpasses, fencing and gates. The Tribe supports the proposed locations of these underpasses as well and expects to continue to coordinate with the Coalition on all location changes, updates, plans, and developments associated with this project.

We look forward to the benefits of participating in this Coalition such as promoting healthy working relationships with state and federal agencies, private landowners and nonprofit organizations, continuing our leadership in landscape level conservation efforts, and protecting cultural and subsistence species that are identified in our Tribe's Fish and Wildlife Management plan.

We recognize that the Safe Passage on Highway 97 Project will provide a safer environment for both people and wildlife and we are in support of this project. Given the hard economic times that we are all operating in we support the Safe Passage on Highway 97 Coalition to lobby, through legislation and nongovernmental organizations, to request funds to complete these projects. At this time no Tribal dollars are expected to be used or contributed to this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Cawston", is written over a horizontal line.

Rodney Cawston, Chairman Colville Business Council



STATE OF WASHINGTON

FREIGHT MOBILITY STRATEGIC INVESTMENT BOARD

505 Union Avenue SE, Suite 350 • PO Box 40965 • Olympia, WA 98504-0965 • (360) 586-9695 • FAX (360) 586-9700

September 5, 2018

Dan Gatchet,
Chair

Brian Ziegler,
Director

Board Members

Leonard Barnes

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Matthew Ewers

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Pat Hulcey

Roger Millar

Arthur Swannack

Tom Trulove

Bob Watters

Web Site

www.fmsib.wa.gov

To Whom It May Concern:

The Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) was created to identify bottlenecks and constraints to safe and efficient freight movement and to recommend and fund solutions to those constraints. FMSIB supports and funds infrastructure investments that further these goals.

State Route 97 in the Okanogan Valley is a key north-south transportation corridor through North Central Washington, traveled by many trucks. The Valley also contains a large deer population, which migrates across the highway frequently. The combination of freight traffic and deer migrating through this narrow corridor results in an epidemic of road kill. On average, 73 deer are killed each year by vehicle collisions along just a 1.5-mile stretch north of Crumbacher Road. In the entire 11 miles, it is estimated that over 350 deer are killed per year.

From the perspective of the Washington Trucking Associations (WTA), "it's about safety, injury prevention, and keeping cost of doing business down. The route is heavily travelled by trucks."

The estimated cost for each vehicle-deer collision averages \$7,180. This includes vehicle repair costs, human injuries, towing, carcass removal/disposal, and accident investigation, as well as the monetary value of the deer. The cost of saving just one injury or even death due to these accidents is priceless. This totals 350 Deer x \$7,180 dollars/deer = \$2.5 million annually in just one 12-mile stretch of highway.

Washington DOT is proposing to improve the highway section by adding two to four underpasses, augmented as needed by fencing, cattle guards or gates, several deer "jump-outs," and "foot-gates."

Crossing structures are immensely useful. Crossings constructed under highways help wildlife safely cross under roads, preventing, on average, 85 percent of all deer-vehicle collisions. They are especially effective when combined with fencing and other aids for funneling wildlife to the underpass (source: Utah State University Report No UT-12.07, May 2012).

Because of the high cost of collisions and disruption to safely transportation freight, FMSIB supports efforts to improve the corridor for wildlife and trucks.



Brian Ziegler
Director



National Wildlife Federation

Northern Rockies, Prairies, and Pacific Regional Center

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Roger Millar
Secretary of Transportation
P.O. Box 47300
Olympia, WA 98504-7300

August 24, 2018

Dear Mr. Millar,

I write on behalf of the National Wildlife Federation to voice support for the proposed Highway 97 Underpass.

The National Wildlife Federation was founded in 1936 and represents over 6 million members and supporters, including more than 126,000 Washington state residents.

According to the Washington Department of Transportation, data collected over the last 22 years indicates that the 12 mile stretch of highway between Riverside and Tonasket has over 350 vehicle-deer collisions each year. These come at a societal cost of over \$6,000 per accident, costing close to 2 million dollars per year in vehicle repairs, removal of carcasses by WSDOT, state patrol response, insurance costs, medical bills, and the lost value of the deer for recreational viewing and or hunting. Fortunately, no one has yet been killed in an accident from one of these collisions.

We recognize that the entire safe-passage project of 12 miles will need to be completed in phases, with the first phase of about 3.5 miles to include three underpasses' along with all necessary fencing, gates, or side road cattleguards to assure wildlife will be routed to and use the underpasses.

To ensure safe passage of both people and wildlife, the National Wildlife Federation supports the installation of the first phase of this safe-passage project and the eventual completion of the full installation along the entire 12 miles of highway.

Sincerely,

Tom France
Regional Director,
Rocky Mountains, Prairies and Pacific Region



Okanogan County Tourism Council

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Visitor Information (888) 431-3080 * www.okanogancountry.com

October 3, 2018

Roger Millard
Secretary of Transportation
Washington State Dept. of Transportation
PO Box 47300
Olympia WA 98504-7300

Subject: Highway 97 Underpass Support

Dear Sir:

The Okanogan County Tourism Council would like to offer our support for the efforts of the Conservation Northwest to get funding for construction of underpass structures on Highway 97 in Okanogan County.

This 12 mile stretch of highway has seen over 350 vehicle-deer collisions each year, it is amazing that no one has yet been killed in an accident. The cost of vehicle repair, emergency medical response, medical costs and carcasses removal, as well as the loss of deer for recreational viewing and hunting is close to \$2 million a year. We believe that something needs to be done to stop this waste of our wildlife and to prevent potentially fatal accidents.

We fully support the efforts of the Safe Passage on Highway 97 Project. The initial installation of three wildlife underpasses with the necessary fencing and cattle guards on the dangerous 4-mile segment will certainly help to create a safer environment for the public and the wildlife in Okanogan County.

From the Canadian Border to Pateros, Highway 97 is federally designated as the Okanogan Trails Scenic Byway. Visitors to our area that travel this beautiful stretch of highway are not expecting mangled deer carcasses and bent fenders as part of the experience to Okanogan Country.

We fully support the efforts of Conservation Northwest and if you need further information, please feel free to contact us at 888 431-3080.

Sincerely,

Teri Leep
Board President



OKANOGAN COUNTY

Board of Commissioners

Chris Branch
Commissioner District 1
Andy Hover
Commissioner District 2
Jim DeTro
Commissioner District 3
Laleña Johns
Clerk of the Board

October 30, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

The Board of Okanogan County Commissioners (BOCC) are acutely aware of, and concerned about, high deer kill areas on the state highway system where there is risk of death and injury for motorists, and where vehicle damage amounts to thousands of dollars over time. One area of high collision frequency that is well known to most residents in the Okanogan Valley is North Highway 97 between Riverside and Tonasket. Most commuters along this route have experienced collisions or near misses with deer, and no doubt have observed the results of these frequent accidents

North Highway 97 between Pateros and the Canadian Border at Oroville is a state-designated Scenic Byway branded as the Okanogan Trails Scenic Byway. Substantial investments have been made to promote this byway, and thousands of travelers are attracted to the intrinsic beauty of this reach of Highway 97. Unfortunately, vehicle damage and the sight of deer carcasses strewn about the highway are not a desirable part of that experience. The condition can result in a disincentive to return to the area, and does not bode well when sharing information with other potential visitors. Thus, negative economic impacts are a result.

Okanogan County is also a popular hunting region where hundreds of hunters flock to the area to pursue a declining mule deer population. It is a foregone conclusion that highway deer kill is a significant factor to be blamed for this decline; again, negative economic impacts are apparent.

U. S. Highway 97 is a strategic freight corridor where shipments of goods and commodities between the U.S. and Canada. Large trucks often take out two or three deer in a incident, and truck damage is common which affects the bottom line for many businesses as their shipments may be delayed and the cost of shipping has to eventually be affected due to insurance and repairs.

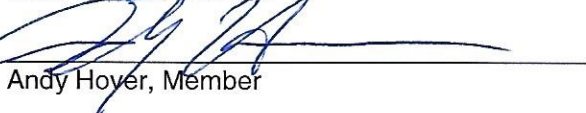
Considering that the overall societal loss reaches into the millions, the BOCC is convinced that the cost of providing a remedy (i.e., wildlife crossings) in the area of concern is well worth the investment. Therefore, the BOCC fully supports the Okanogan Trails Chapter of the Mule Deer Foundation and their partners and supporters in their efforts to establish wildlife crossings in this stretch of State Route 97.

Respectfully,

BOARD OF OKANOGAN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



Jim DeTro, Chairman

Chris Branch, Member

Andy Hover, Member

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