

March 24, 2026

The Honorable Dave Cortese, Chair
Senate Transportation Committee
State Capitol, Room 405
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Support for SB 1250 – Wildlife Connectivity in California Transportation Planning

Dear Senator Cortese:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we write in strong support of SB 1250, which integrates wildlife connectivity into California's transportation planning by making it a core performance objective of the Department of Transportation's (Caltrans) State Highway Asset Management System and embedding measurable targets in the Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP).

Wildlife crossings are not being planned for and implemented at a sufficient level because they are not treated as core transportation infrastructure. Caltrans does not formally integrate wildlife connectivity into its asset management system, so crossings are often handled as stand-alone conservation projects instead of being built alongside routine highway upgrades.

California's roads fragment habitat and create dangerous conditions for people and wildlife, with wildlife-vehicle collisions costing Californians more than \$200 million annually and posing serious safety risks. Integrating connectivity into routine planning allows crossings and fencing to be designed and built alongside scheduled State Highway System (SHS) upgrades—making projects safer, more efficient, and a better use of public dollars.

SB 1250 addresses long-recognized gaps by: (1) establishing wildlife connectivity as a formal performance objective within the asset management system; (2) requiring clear connectivity targets in the TAMP; and (3) clarifying a collaborative, transparent process for public input and interagency coordination to develop Caltrans' inventory of connectivity needs.

This reform arrives at an especially important moment. The California Fish and Game Commission has just voted to list southern California and Central Coast mountain lions as threatened under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). That decision cites habitat fragmentation, roadway barriers, and genetic isolation as key threats. Like mountain lions, many other species, including desert tortoise, bighorn sheep, and San

Joaquin kit fox, are similarly at risk. Aligning transportation planning with these protections is both timely and necessary to support species recovery.

Beyond the immediate safety benefits, connectivity is essential to prevent genetic isolation and inbreeding documented in several California mountain lion populations. Strategic crossings, underpasses, and continuous fencing help keep wildlife moving through habitat—reducing the likelihood that animals end up on highways or trapped in neighborhoods.

We appreciate Caltrans' ongoing efforts, including its implementation of the Wildlife Connectivity Program and district-level collaborations, and view SB 1250 as providing support to the work Caltrans is already doing while presenting a clear statewide mandate and performance framework needed to scale those efforts consistently and efficiently.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your support of the bill when it is heard in the Senate Transportation Committee.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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