



CITY OF FLAGSTAFF

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

211 West Aspen Avenue, Flagstaff, Arizona 86001

Main Line: 928-213-2000

Website: <https://www.flagstaff.az.gov>

July 21, 2023

Mr. Shailen Bhatt
Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Bhatt:

The Flagstaff City Council supports the application of the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) to the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Fiscal Year 2023 Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program (WCPP) project. ADOT is requesting approximately \$22 million in WCPP funding to complete final design and construction of the proposed Wildlife Crossing overpass along Interstate-17 (I-17) south of the City of Flagstaff. The wildlife crossing will be used by elk and other species that cross the highway, as well as nearly 17 miles of fencing, cattle guards, and concrete escape ramps that act as a barrier between wildlife and automobiles traveling on the interstate.

Studies along the Project section found that wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVC) accounted for the highest percentage of all crash causes (29%), with some one-mile segments exceeding 40% which surpasses the 4.6% national average for WVC on rural highways. The construction of a wildlife crossing along the corridor will reduce the number of WVC while enhancing habitat connectivity that is currently limited by the highway's barrier effect on wildlife movement. ADOT's previous experience with grade-separated wildlife crossings has demonstrated that these projects are effective in reducing WVC as well as promoting permeability across the highway. The 2011 Munds Canyon Retrofit Fencing Project, which installed fencing and funneled elk toward bridges under the same highway, resulted in a 98% reduction in elk-vehicle collisions and dramatically increased the use of the bridges by elk and mule deer, demonstrating the potential to reduce both WVC and the highway barrier effect.

ADOT will use the requested funds, if awarded, to construct a wildlife crossing overpass that is expected to reduce collisions between wildlife and vehicles and reduce the highway barrier effect, in an area of critical need along I-17, one of Arizona's major connecting corridors. The goal of the WCPP Project is to promote motorist safety from reduced wildlife-vehicle collisions and increased habitat connectivity along the I-17.



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The Flagstaff City Council supports this project and believes it will help protect and keep both travelers and wildlife safe. We would like to thank FHWA for its consideration of this Project.

Sincerely,

Becky Daggett,
Mayor of Flagstaff, on behalf of the Flagstaff City Council