



April 8th, 2025

The Honorable Howard Watts
Chair
The Honorable Max E. Carter II
Vice Chair
Assembly Committee on Growth and Infrastructure
Nevada State Legislature
401 S. Carson St.
Carson City, NV 89701

Re: Statement of The Pew Charitable Trusts in support of AB486

Dear Chair Watts and Vice Chair Carter II,

The Pew Charitable Trusts' (Pew) U.S. Conservation program writes in support of Assembly Bill 486 (AB486), relating to the funding of wildlife crossing projects. This bill would collect a \$1 fee from a purchaser of new tires and require those proceeds to be deposited into Nevada's Wildlife Crossing Account to support the construction of wildlife crossings in the state. **This dedicated funding stream will enable the state to successfully leverage federal funds currently available via competitive grants for transportation projects that reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve habitat connectivity.** We urge the Assembly Committee on Growth and Infrastructure to support this important legislation for consideration by the full Assembly as soon as possible.

The Pew Charitable Trust's (Pew) US Conservation program advances commonsense solutions that address the impacts of a changing environment on nature and communities, in collaboration with policy makers, Tribes, and stakeholders.

Emerging science and new technologies provide considerable opportunity for states to integrate wildlife conservation into transportation policy. With advances in research technology, such as GPS-enabled collars, we now have detailed information on how and where these animals travel between summer and winter habitats, how barriers such as highways and development can negatively affect wildlife populations, and where infrastructure interventions can have the greatest benefit for both wildlife and people.

According to the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT), more than 500 wildlife-vehicle collisions are reported each year, costing the state nearly \$20 million. Transportation officials estimate that the actual figure is much higher, and collisions with deer and other species, including elk, moose and bighorn sheep, are widely recognized as underreported, and ¹ NDOT

¹ Lee, T. S., K. Rondeau, R. Schaefele, A. P. Clevenger & D. Duke. 2020. Developing a correction factor to apply to animal-vehicle collision data for improved road mitigation measures. Wildlife Research: <https://www.publish.csiro.au/wr/pdf/WR20090>
[pewtrusts.org](https://www.pewtrusts.org)

estimates the true number could be closer to 5,000 annually, with fewer than 10 percent officially documented.

These accidents have a significant cost. New research from September 2022 finds that vehicle damage, medical expenses, and lost hunting value bring the average nationwide cost of a deer collision to \$19,089 and an elk collision is \$73,196². As wildlife and humans increasingly interact in the built environment, investing in wildlife crossings would reduce costs, protect drivers, and conserve Nevada's diverse wildlife.

Nevada has a track record of proactively addressing this issue and has 50 animal crossings in place for both large and small animals, including 6 overpasses (three on I-80, two on US 93 and one on I-11). These projects have been highly successful, resulting in significant reductions in wildlife-vehicle collisions. Studies have demonstrated up to 90 percent fewer wildlife-vehicle collisions where there is a crossing structure and fencing to funnel animals to safe passage either over or under a roadway.³ Additionally, AB112's (2023) creation of The Wildlife Crossings Account as, well as the initial one-time \$5 million investment therein, represented a significant step in establishing a framework to build upon.

Despite this progress, challenges persist with consistent funding of wildlife friendly transportation infrastructure and the persistence of wildlife-vehicle collisions in the state have demonstrated that demand for these projects far exceeds capacity. Wildlife crossing projects require substantial up-front costs. State governments often struggle to obtain adequate funding sources for managing and maintaining existing and aging infrastructure, which can hinder the state's ability to pursue new standalone wildlife-friendly transportation projects. Developing dedicated funding sources at the state level is critical to stimulating successful implementation of new wildlife crossing projects throughout Nevada.

The broadly bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 established the Wildlife-Crossing Pilot program under the purview of the Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration to help fund projects that reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve habitat connectivity.⁴ The law provides \$350 million over five years for competitive grants to states, communities, and Tribes. But this federal investment is not enough, and competitive grant applications require a 20 percent match of state funds, similar to long-established programs, such as the Federal Lands Transportation Program, Federal Lands Access Program, Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, and the Rural Surface Transportation Program. Under this scenario, a \$5 million state investment could leverage an additional \$20 million in federal funding to make Nevada's roads safer.

² Huijser, M.P., J.W. Duffield, C. Neher, A.P. Clevenger & T. McGuire. 2022. Cost-benefit analyses of mitigation measures along highways for large animal species: An update and an expansion of the 2009 model: https://www.mphetc.com/files/ugd/9d46fb_b9852393a44d4148bd92feac37fc034e.pdf

³ M.P. Huijser, P. McGowen, J. Fuller, A. Hardy, A. Kociolek, A.P. Clevenger, D. Smith and R. Ament Wildlife-Vehicle Collision Reduction Study: Report to Congress

⁴ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration <https://highways.dot.gov/federal-lands/wildlife-crossings/pilot-program>

Taking advantage of this opportunity, in the past three years, state legislatures in Colorado, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah and Wyoming have passed new laws creating state wildlife crossing accounts and dedicating state funding for the construction of new wildlife crossings. The state of Utah recently appropriated \$20 million to fund the construction of new wildlife-friendly bridges and underpasses. Moreover, New Mexico's legislature passed a \$50 million appropriation last month for the construction of new wildlife crossings. Most of these new policies passed with strong bipartisan backing, as well as broad support from entities such as sporting groups, local businesses, insurers, conservation organizations, and the oil and gas interests. The diversity of this support underscores that reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions is a win for motorists, wildlife, and local communities, making roads safer for people and allowing animals to safely traverse their migratory habitat. Enactment and implementation of AB486 would represent a significant step towards achieving this commonsense objective.

During times of tight state budgets, it is more important than ever to prioritize fiscally responsible investments. Given the high costs from wildlife vehicle collisions, properly sited wildlife crossings and fencing along high-collision highways can quickly offset their initial expense by reducing the need for emergency services, medical response, property repairs, and the loss of wildlife. Sustainable funding for wildlife crossings is a smart financial decision for Nevada.

Thank you for your consideration of Pew's support for AB486. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at ncallero@pewtrusts.org, or 503-977-5467, should you need additional information.

Sincerely,



Nic Callero
Senior Officer, U.S. Conservation
The Pew Charitable Trusts

CC: Members of the Nevada Assembly Committee on Growth and Infrastructure

The Honorable Shea Backus
The Honorable Tracy Brown-May
The Honorable Venise Karris
The Honorable Cinthia Moore
The Honorable Duy Nguyen
The Honorable Jill Dickman
The Honorable Danielle Gallant
The Honorable Bert Gurr
The Honorable Toby Yurek