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Ohio Department of Transportation - Comments

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The Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Notice of Request for Reinstatement of a Previously Approved Information Collection, as published in the Federal Register on August 4, 2025 (90 FR 36517). ODOT strongly supports the continued existence and effective operation of the Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program (WCPP) and, consequently, the reinstatement of its associated information collection.

The Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program (WCPP) is a vital initiative. Its core objective to reduce wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve habitat connectivity for terrestrial and aquatic species directly addresses critical safety and environmental challenges faced by states like Ohio. Wildlife-vehicle collisions pose significant risks to human safety, result in substantial economic damages, and negatively impact wildlife populations and ecosystem health. Programs like the WCPP provide essential funding and a strategic framework to mitigate these pressing issues.

The funding is crucial for states to implement necessary infrastructure projects that can prevent collisions and enhance biodiversity. These projects often require significant investment beyond typical state transportation budgets, making federal support indispensable. Ohio has a large transportation infrastructure footprint laced across a biologically and topographically diverse landscape. The opportunity to reduce collisions with wildlife at strategic locations across this network is not readily funded through any other program. The continued opportunity to compete for funding through this pilot program is critically important. ODOT encourages the FHWA to support future applications for this funding from Midwestern states like Ohio.

While ODOT fully supports the WCPP and the necessary information collection for its effective oversight, we urge the FHWA to prioritize minimizing the reporting burden needed to fulfill obligations under the program. The Federal Register notice itself invites comments on "ways that the burden could be minimized, including the use of electronic technology, without reducing the quality of the collected information". ODOT recommends that the FHWA actively explore and implement strategies to streamline reporting requirements,

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leverage existing data where possible, and utilize electronic technology to reduce the time and effort required from respondents while maintaining the quality and usefulness of the collected information. This approach will ensure that valuable resources are primarily directed towards the program's vital objectives of improving safety and connectivity.

In conclusion, the ODOT strongly supports the FHWA intention to request for the Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program. This program represents a critical investment in public safety, environmental protection, and resilient infrastructure. This program is the first of its kind and is vital to moving towards progress in human safety and wildlife conservation.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

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