



Description and Location:

Construction of a safe passage for wildlife to cross under Highway 17 near Laurel Curve.

Project Purpose:

- Highway 17 is the major freeway connection between the San Francisco Bay Area and the Monterey Bay Region through the Santa Cruz Mountains. More than 65,000 vehicles travel the highway each day (24 million vehicles a year).
- The Santa Cruz Mountains are home to a variety of wildlife species including endangered and threatened species.
- The dense traffic, concrete median barriers, and lack of culvert undercrossings or bridges make Highway 17 a major barrier for wildlife moving through the Santa Cruz Mountains. As a result, Highway 17 has proved deadly for wildlife and humans.
- Many wildlife (including mountain lions, bobcats, and deer) have been hit trying to cross Highway 17 near Laurel Curve, which can also be dangerous for motorists and Caltrans road crews.
- The highway at Laurel Curve is built over a large natural drainage, an ideal place to install a culvert to allow animals to travel beneath the highway.
- The wildlife corridor connects two core habitat areas identified in several landscape-scale wildlife connectivity modeling efforts.

Implementing Agency: California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

Cost and Funding:

- Project cost: \$12.4 million (estimate)
- Santa Cruz County Measure D: \$5 million for construction
- State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP): \$3 million for environmental review and design
- Land Trust: Raised \$5 million to secure right-of-way adjacent to the highway and is working to raise an additional \$3 million for the construction phase.

Schedule: Construction is currently expected to begin in 2020/21. RTC staff will be working with the Land Trust and Caltrans to investigate financing and other funding options to expedite delivery.

Funding Partners:



Project Contact: Caltrans District 5 – (805) 549-3318; info-d5@dot.ca.gov

