

FACT SHEET



Laurel Curve Wildlife Crossing Project
 Caltrans District 5
 Santa Cruz County
 State Route-17 (EA: 05-1G260)



PROJECT BACKGROUND

In the last couple of years, wildlife crossings have become an important statewide issue. Because Caltrans owns and maintains so many lane miles that run through environmentally sensitive areas, we are seen as a potential leader in creation of new and effective wildlife crossings. When first imagined in January 2014, the Laurel Curve Wildlife Crossing Project presented an amazing opportunity to partner with a diverse group of public and private organizations. Considerable work has been invested into this diverse partnership which sets the stage for future collaborations. Over the years, Caltrans has been encouraged to seek partnerships for our scarce SHOPP funding. This project provides a perfect example of what can be done to multiply the impact of SHOPP funding when we find motivated partners. It cannot be overly stressed how important and innovative this approach to environmental partnership is to Caltrans, the environment and to the taxpayer. There are not many projects that can boast that Caltrans has partnered with the such a wide variety of private and private entities including: Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, University of California Santa Cruz and Pathways for Wildlife.

PROJECT BENEFITS

- Unique Collaboration of Private and Public Partners**
 An array of private and public partners came together to support a community-driven goal of environmental enhancement for the Mountain Lion, a California Endangered Species Act Candidate. Partners included the Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, University of California Santa Cruz, Pathways for Wildlife and Caltrans.

- **Innovative Funding Partnerships**

The Laurel Curve Wildlife Crossing is a partnered project with millions of dollars in leveraged funds. The project provides an exciting example of how many diverse public and private entities can come together and provide substantial benefits to wildlife species. Financial partners include:

- Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission – Providing \$5 million in local tax measure funding towards Construction Capital. The tax measure was supported by over 2/3 of the voters.
- Land Trust of Santa Cruz County – Providing over \$2 million in local donations towards Construction Capital and \$10,000,000 in purchased property rights value on both sides of Highway 17 to protect the wildlife corridor.
- Caltrans – Preconstruction and support is funded by the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP)

Caltrans overall investment of \$5,415,000 will be more than doubled by the investment of up to \$7,000,000 towards Construction Capital from our partners. This also does not include the \$10,000,000 invested by the Land Trust for Right of Way to ensure the success of the project.

- **Provides Credits For Future Mitigation**

Investment of Caltrans funding results in valuable mitigation credits for a variety of future projects in District 5. Once the project is complete, there will be 92 mitigation credits that can be used in a wide variety of future projects including an upcoming bridge rail replacement project. In fact, we have already received 46 credits due to the completion of the PA&ED phase. Upon completion of the PS&E phase, an additional 46 credits will be available for Caltrans use. The value of these credits can and will go up as the agreement between the different agencies called for the credit value to be tied to whatever was spent by

- **Support From The Highest Level of California Government**

This project received support from the Secretary of CalSTA with strong encouragement to work with CDFW to develop a project that would develop strong partnerships as well as result in usable mitigation credits. Support was received from many different directions including the public, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies (the only criticism in public meetings was why the wildlife crossing could not be built faster).

PROJECT HISTORY

- **2011 - Conservation Blueprint** identifies roads as major barrier to wildlife connectivity
- **January 2014 - Project Scoping Complete.** During the K-Phase, this location was identified as the highest need and benefit location for habitat connectivity in the area based on scientific studies and regional and statewide modelling.
- **2014-2015 – Land Trust of SC County protects properties** near Laurel Curve on Highway 17
- **June 2015 - Project Initiation Document (PID) Complete**
- **2016-2017 - California Transportation Commission (CTC) approve funds to move the project forward into PA&ED.** Efforts by the Land Trust and other organizations reaching out to leadership in Sacramento Caltrans HQ the state Transportation Agency Secretary to work with CDFW to get an

agreement for credits. CTC required the agreement to be in place prior to funding the 0 and 1 phase for the project. Locals (SCCRTC and The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County) raised funds for the construction of the crossing.

- **April 2017 - Agreement signed with California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW)**
- **May 2017 - PA&ED Phase Opened**
- **2017 - Easement Acquired By The Land Trust of Santa Cruz County.** The Land Trust acquired additional property rights along the highway curve at Laurel Road bringing total preserved to over 700 acres within the wildlife corridor. This also allowed CT to have rights for the construction and maintenance of the structure.
- **2018 - Santa Cruz County Voters Approve Measure D Sales Tax.** The approved transportation tax measure includes five million dollars for construction capital and financing for the Laurel Curve Wildlife Crossing. The measure passed with support of over 2/3 of voters.
- **May 2018 - Project Approval/Environmental Document (PA&ED) Phase Complete (M200)**
- **July 2018 - Design (PS&E) Phase Started**
- **February 2020 – Financing Plan approved.** RTC approves Measure D Strategic Implementation Plan authorizing inter-program loans to accelerate implementation and availability of Measure funds.
- **March 2020 - SHOPP Construction support funds programmed by California Transportation Commission.** Construction support funding added for the project from the District 05 SHOPP Variance. The District Director was fully supportive of this action as Caltrans’ commitment to the partnerships.
- **September 2020 - Cooperative Agreement signed with SCCRTC.** The cooperative agreement provided up to \$7 million for construction capital funding from Measure D and the Land Trust.
- **February 8, 2021 – Design completed** and project achieved Ready-to-List (RTL) Milestone (M460)
- **May 2021 - California Transportation Commission (CTC) allocation of Construction Support funds**
- **Summer 2021 - Advertise and award construction contract**
- **Fall 2021 - Start Construction**
- **2022 – Complete Construction**

PROJECT COST

• PA&ED Support	\$738,000
• PS&E Support	\$2,013,000
• R/W Support	\$226,000
• Construction Support	\$2,300,000
• R/W Capital	\$138,000
• Construction Capital	\$7,000,000 (Funded By Land Trust and Measure D)