



# Neighborhood Projects: Highway 17 Wildlife Crossing

## Project Description

Caltrans, the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission, the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, and resource agencies partnered to construct a wildlife undercrossing on Highway 17 near Laurel Road in Santa Cruz County.

The Santa Cruz Mountains are home to a variety of wildlife species including endangered and threatened species. The area of Highway 17 at Laurel Road has been identified as a critical linkage for two core wildlife habitat areas on either side of the highway.

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 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. Many wildlife (including mountain lions, bobcats, and deer) have been hit trying to cross Highway 17 near Laurel Road.

Highway 17 at Laurel Road is built over a large natural drainage, an ideal place to install a bridge to allow animals to travel beneath the highway. At the project location, 460 acres of mostly undeveloped land on both sides of the highway have been preserved in a conservation easement by the Land Trust of Santa Cruz County.



## Project Highlights

- ▶ Provides safe passage for wildlife to cross under Highway 17 near Laurel Road
- ▶ Bridges two core wildlife habitat areas on each side of Highway 17
- ▶ Traffic volumes of over 60,00 vehicles per day, combined with a concrete median barrier and a lack of adequate culvert or bridge undercrossings contribute to animal-vehicle collisions along Highway 17.
- ▶ Collaborative project between the Regional Transportation Commission, Land Trust of Santa Cruz County, and Caltrans

## Project Delivery Strategy

Caltrans lead the project delivery. The pre-construction phases were funded with Caltrans State Highway Operation and Protection Program funds. The RTC used Measure D funds to leverage additional SHOPP and Land Trust funds for construction. The RTC used an interprogram loan of Measure D Highway Corridor funds to expedite construction of the Wildlife Crossing.



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## Total Programming

<b>Estimated Total Cost</b>	<b>\$12.5M</b>
<b>Funding Sources</b>	
Measure D (Neighborhood)*	\$5M
Other Secured**	\$7.5M

\*Includes loan payments (principal and interest)  
\*\*Includes Land Trust and SHOPP funds.

## Project Status/Schedule

Construction started in February 2022. Most of the construction was completed at the end of 2022, with final striping 2023.



## Funding Partners

