



News Release
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**\$3.1 Million for Land Trust's Hwy. 17 Wildlife Crossing
CA Transportation Commission Commits Funds for Design**

Earlier today, California Transportation Commission (CTC), the governing Board of Caltrans, voted to commit \$3.1 million to help build a wildlife crossing under Highway 17. Design work could begin in a few months.

The state's commitment is good news for the Land Trust, which took the first step toward building the wildlife crossing in early 2014 with the protection of a 10-acre property at Laurel Curve. To date, the non-profit has protected two properties totaling 290 acres on the east side of the highway, and is currently raising funds to purchase a conservation easement on 170 acres west of Laurel Curve.

The Land Trust Project Director Dan Medeiros says "Protecting land on either side of the future tunnel is a critical piece to the project's success. Once the tunnel is built, wildlife will need undeveloped land to roam. It is essential for their survival."

Wildlife Biologist and owner of Pathways for Wildlife Tanya Diamond says that 45% of wildlife hit on Highway 17 are hit at Laurel Curve. "I've been tracking wildlife at Laurel Curve for almost three years now and we've seen a lot of animals meet their tragic end there. Lots of deer, bobcats, a mountain lion. And it's not safe for drivers either."

The Land Trust's wildlife crossing project will be the pilot project for new legislature that provides "advance mitigation" credits to Caltrans. The program which will run under the CA Department of Fish and Wildlife, awards transportation improvement credits to Caltrans for their support on large-scale conservation efforts.

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“This project will pave the way for other wildlife crossing projects across the state,” says Medeiros. “It really changes the game.”

Cost estimates put construction of the tunnel anywhere between \$8 and \$12 million. If the transportation Measure D passes on November 8, \$5 million will be contributed to construction of the tunnel. If funds are secured through Measure D, the tunnel could be built by 2020. Land Trust Executive Director Stephen Slade says the Land Trust has committed \$3 million for construction of the tunnel, which will be raised from individuals as part of its Great Land and Trail Campaign.

Slade said the Land Trust is still seeking support for this project. They are more than \$2 million away from their \$6.5 million goal in the Wildlife & Wildlands portion of their campaign. To help the Land Trust reach their goal, an anonymous donor will double all gifts to the Land Trust’s wildlife crossing campaign through Thursday, October 27. For more details and to donate, visit www.landtrustsantacruz.org, or call the Land Trust at (831) 429-6116.