



## Funding Wildlife Corridors re Virginia's Biennial Budget

Delivered before the Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee

January 5, 2023

I am a member of Friends of Accotink Creek, speaking in support of funding for Animal Crossings. VDOT reports some 60,000 deer crashes every year. In 2020, Virginia was # 12 in the nation for deer-vehicle collisions. The problem is that wildlife habitat has become horribly fragmented due to human activity.

Imagine I burst into your home and put a wall between your fridge and your oven, build another one between the TV and the sofa, and throw one more between your bed and your bathroom, and then I fill these walls with hornets and Copperheads. Well, that is what our never ending spread of human development is doing to our wildlife. We have chopped up their living spaces into isolated parcels, and when they try to get from one to another, they risk becoming road kill.

How many road crossing, light switch changes, and crosswalks has Virginia for its human pedestrians? They must number in the millions. How many crossing guards are employed to escort human children across roads that lack these features? Over 1,500. This is very good, and I'm happy we have these necessary measures for public safety, but can't we spare some funding for the nonhuman residents of Virginia whose habitat we have greatly diminished by pollution and development? Deer, black bears, raccoons, groundhogs, frogs, salamanders, box turtles - they need to move too.

Just installing wire fences along existing underpasses has been shown to be cost-effective. For example, along Virginia's interstate 1-64 near Charlottesville, VDOT put up 1-mile of fencing to direct wildlife to two existing underpasses, used by but not designed for wildlife. One was a box culvert, the other a bridge underpass. The result was dramatic: 92% fewer deer-car collisions.

Money spent on enhancing animal crossings (many cost under \$200K) are offset by savings associated with less human injury, fewer deaths, and less vehicle damage.

Please adequately fund animal crossings in Virginia. Thank you.

## Friends of Accotink Creek

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