



**WILDLIFE CROSSING PILOT PROGRAM  
GRANT APPLICATION**

**SHARKEYVILLE BROOK  
WILDLIFE CROSSING**

RECONNECTING WILDLIFE  
IN THE GREEN MOUNTAINS ON INTERSTATE 89

**APPENDIX A  
LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

**WATERBURY, VT**

SUBMITTED BY:



SEPTEMBER 4, 2024

**Department of Fish and Wildlife**1 National Life Dr., Davis 2  
Montpelier, VT 05620-3702[www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)[phone] 802-828-1454  
[fax] 802-828-1250*Agency of Natural Resources*

August 26, 2024

Secretary Pete Buttigieg, U.S. Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department, I am writing to express our support for the Waterbury IM CULV(109) funding proposal to the Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program. The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has collaborated closely with the Vermont Agency of Transportation on this proposal. This project is critically important for allowing wildlife movement under I89 and VT Route 2 in Waterbury, VT that bisect the Green Mountains and represents a unique opportunity to retroactively mitigate the effects of a significant road barrier. This location is crucial in restoring connectivity between the northern and central Green Mountains. The existing structure is approximately 4.5' wide, 390+' long and is perched, representing a significant barrier to both fish & wildlife species. This proposal would fund construction costs for a large-span arch to replace the existing structure that allow for both fish and wildlife movement.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department (FWD) has been focused on increasing wildlife permeability across this section of the interstate for several decades. In 2004, FWD worked with VTrans to develop our first roadkill database that flagged significant mortality along this section of the highway. In 2012, Department staff worked with VTrans in developing the scope of work and fine-tuning the methodology for the Bolton-Waterbury camera and tracking project conducted by Macfarland Johnson that first identified the Waterbury IM CULV(109) site. Because of that work, VTrans & FWD developed the state's first wildlife shelf under I89 at Little River 2.25 miles to the east of the proposed project in 2013 and have conducted three camera studies and developed our Terrestrial Passage Screening Tool. This project represents the next implementation step in addressing connectivity at this important location.

The state's Wildlife Action Plan lists "impacts of roads and transportation systems" and "climate change" as two of the six most pressing problems facing the state's wildlife populations. The document details an approach to climate change adaptation that focuses on habitat connectivity and working at both the landscape and site specific scales to address these challenges. This project is an important step in allowing for wildlife species to adjust their ranges north and south in the face of a changing climate and reduces direct mortality from roads for numerous far ranging mammal species (several of which are listed as Species of Greatest Conservation Need). In the long run, projects like this allow for genetic exchange across a significant road barrier. Since 2012, 18 bear, 15 moose and many deer and smaller mammals have been killed in this section of I89 representing significant threats to driver safety and barrier to wildlife movement.



The Department has worked with the Agency of Natural Resources and partners to identify the lands and waters most important for ecological function now and into the future. Our Vermont Conservation Design is available to the public on the BioFinder website and prioritizes these important places in VT. The design operates at the landscape scale, identifying Highest Priority Connectivity Blocks that are connected forests allowing for wildlife movement across VT. This site occurs directly in between two of the larger and most significant Connectivity Blocks. The Vermont Conservation Design also designates priorities at the Community & Species scales with the Wildlife Road Crossings Component. This site is designated as a Highest Priority Wildlife Road Crossing as well.

Lastly, FWD & VTrans are founding partners of the Staying Connected Initiative focused on habitat connectivity across the Northern Appalachian/ Acadian ecoregion. Staying Connected Initiative is a public/private partnership with more than 70 Federal, State, Provincial and NGO partners across the northeastern US and southeastern Canada. Five of Staying Connected Initiative's critically important wildlife linkages occur in VT making the connectivity in VT of utmost importance across the entire eco-region. The Waterbury site is part of the Northern Green Mountains to Suttons linkage and further connects the north Greens to the central Green Mountains.

FWD is an active participant in this project and supports this grant proposal.

Respectfully,



Christopher Herrick, Commissioner  
Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

cc: Joseph Flynn, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Transportation  
Julie Moore, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 29, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

We write to express our support for the Vermont Agency of Transportation's application for the Federal Highway Administration's Wildlife Crossing Pilot Program (CFDA #20.205) to build the Sharkeyville Brook Wildlife Crossing under Interstate 89 and U.S. Route 2 in Waterbury, Vermont. We are pleased to bring this proposal to your attention.

The stretch of Interstate 89 and U.S. Route 2 located near Waterbury, Vermont divides 126,000 acres of Vermont forestland that are home to deer, moose, bears, mink, fish, and many other native species. A 2016 study by the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) and the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife found that this stretch of roadway represents a significant barrier to wildlife movement throughout the northern portion of the Green Mountain National Forest, fragmenting natural habitats and creating roadway hazards when animals do attempt to cross.

With the requested funding, VTrans would convert an existing culvert, which is too small for wildlife to freely move under the roadways, into an underpass large enough to accommodate large animals like black bears, white-tailed deer, and moose. This project would also allow the Sharkeyville Brook, a tributary of the Winooski River, to flow more freely through the valley below the roadway, which will allow aquatic species like fish, salamanders, and wood turtles to move more easily beneath the Interstate 89 and U.S. Route 2 roadways. These wildlife habitat connectivity benefits are especially important given the current and future impacts of climate change, which is already forcing wildlife populations in and around Vermont to drastically adjust their ranges of movement.

We appreciate you giving this application the serious consideration it deserves. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide further evidence of our support.

Sincerely,



BERNARD SANDERS  
United States Senator



PETER WELCH  
United States Senator



BECCA BALINT  
Member of Congress