



Board of County Commissioners

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February 17, 2023

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

RE: Support for I-70 East Vail Pass Wildlife Crossing - RAISE 2023

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

As the Board of County Commissioners of Eagle County, we write to express our strong support for Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and Summit County as they pursue a RAISE 2023 grant for the I-70 East Vail Pass Wildlife Crossings Project. The project will install three wildlife crossings on the westbound lanes of I-70 and 16 miles of wildlife-exclusion fencing between Vail Pass and Copper Mountain, and leverage existing bridge infrastructure on I-70 to provide landscape permeability across one of the state's largest interstates.

The project is a collaborative effort between CDOT, Summit County, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and Summit County Safe Passages, a nonprofit agency. The main goals of this Project include:

1. Restore landscape connectivity for deer, elk, moose, bighorn sheep, and the federally threatened Canada lynx across 12 miles of the White River National Forest
2. Restore connectivity for over 17,000 acres in the West Ten-Mile Creek Watershed
3. Improve traveler safety along a significant freight and transit corridor in the Southern Rocky Mountains and central Colorado by reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions

The Transportation Commission recently awarded the project \$750,000 from the state general fund via the bipartisan Senate Bill 151 'Safe Crossings for Colorado Wildlife and Drivers'. Project partner Summit County Safe Passages is receiving donations for the project and is leveraging private sector interest to secure project support, including partnerships with Vail, Copper Mountain, and Arapahoe Basin ski resorts. Summit County recently submitted a grant request for \$500,000 to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to advance the project to a 30% design milestone. This project is an enormous priority for CDOT, CPW, USFS, Summit and Eagle Counties, and Colorado as we work to make our transportation network safer for all residents, people and wildlife alike.

We wholeheartedly support this project and request USDOT to prioritize RAISE grant funding for this worthy proposal.

Sincerely,

Kathy Chandler-Henry

Chair

Matt Scherr

Commissioner

Jeanne McQueeney

Commissioner