

November 19, 2024

TO: DCHC MPO Policy Board
FROM: David Miller, MPO Staff
Madeline Galliano, MPO Staff
SUBJECT: Public Comments Received from DCHC MPO's Wildlife Crossing Planning Study
Public Engagement Period

As part of DCHC MPO's survey for its Wildlife Crossing Planning Study, questions #4 and #5 asked the public for open-ended responses. Out of the 129 surveys submitted, 76 comments were received from these two questions. The public comments received during the public engagement period are reflected as originally provided. All names or identifiers have been removed to protect the privacy of individuals.

Question #4 of the Survey:

Your experience with roadway safety and wildlife-vehicle crashes are important. Please consider sharing your experience(s) with us.

48 responses received for this question from 129 completed surveys

1	We live in northern Orange County and have had near misses with deer, etc. often.
2	We have run into deer, as have man people I know. Last year I helped rescue a turtle that had been hit crossing 54 at the Waterfowl Impoundment and put it back in the woods.
3	We drive cautiously to avoid deer casualties, especially around dawn and dusk. Despite our best efforts, a deer that lagged behind the herd hit our van, wandered off hurt. It cost us a four-figure amount to fix the damage. No winners in this story - thanks for your work to keep everyone safe!
4	Vehicle wreck 2023, deer.
5	South ellerbee Creek goes through a culvert under Washington Street right next to I-85. There's no easy terrestrial crossing of Washington unless you go right along the exit for North Duke Street. There are extensive wetlands on either side. I've seen several large animals cross at this point and because the road is so wide people drive much faster than the 35 mph speed limit there. It's also a blind Hill and curve.

6	Small birds, groundhogs, raccoons and opossums, etc. are something I see commonly hit and are likely unreported. There is a bridge with an underpass near me (NC 54) that is small, blocked, and unused. Much small roadkill nearby. It is meant to connect the northeast creek.
7	Several years ago we were driving eastbound on I-85 west of Greensboro in heavy traffic at night. This was the section that is several lanes wide. Traffic was very heavy. Some car ahead of us had hit a young deer, which was in the road and we couldn't avoid it. We drove over it, which was frightening. We were lucky that there was only cosmetic damage to the car. We live in the Raleigh area, and regularly see dead wildlife (racoons, squirrels, cats, etc.) in the road. I would like to see more natural crossings to reduce deaths and injuries to animals, and I would also like to see local governments remove dead animals from the road and shoulders.
8	Our family has been involved in a few wildlife-vehicle crashes. It is devastating. We are huge animal/wildlife lovers and are anguished at the unnecessary and traumatic loss of life (from turtles, snakes, to raccoons, opossums and deer, etc.). It's a horrific way to die and leaves many young animals orphaned and also at risk of death. In one crash, we also sustained a 'totaled' vehicle, requiring purchase of another car.
9	One car crash at night due to a deer jumping in front of the car - car had to be replaced
10	My husband hit a deer on Hillandale Road in Durham and his nearly new car was totaled.
11	My husband and a deer collided a few years ago on Umstead Road in north Durham. The deer was killed; my husband was fine; the truck was damaged. Any good ideas to minimize these accidents are worth pursuing.
12	My family members have hit animals in the past, both locally and living in other states. It is emotionally jarring even without vehicle damage or human injury. However one of our cars was totaled after hitting a deer on an interstate in Wisconsin. My family member was lucky to survive. Most of the wildlife do not survive collisions, and I'm all for making safer passages for them. We lived near Barbee Chapel Rd at Spring Meadow Dr (near the Orange Cty/Durham Cty line), and soooo many animals died on that curve in Barbee Chapel. It's near the Farrington Rd. project. Maybe some speed traps would help there!
13	My brother and husband have both hit deer. I may have hit raccoons. I saw squirrels and a cat get hit. My cat was hit when I was a kid. It hurts to think about. Every life is precious (human and animal). Please do everything you can.
14	Living in N Durham, I've had several near misses with deer on main roads, and I have witnessed many deceased squirrels, opossums, and family pets sadly along the way

15	Killed a deer in 1986 after I-40 was extended in CH.
16	I've had several near misses and one traumatic instance of hitting a raccoon while drive. While the raccoon did not cause damage to the car, it took a very unpleasant experience that I hope to never repeat. I also have significant concern with hitting larger animals that could cause harm to my vehicle or myself, in addition to the animal.
17	I've been in near-crashes many times! A big concern for my family.
18	It's heartbreaking to see the aftermath of wildlife-vehicle crashes!
19	It's always distressing to see a wild animal needlessly injured or killed by a vehicle.
20	It makes me very sad to see deceased wildlife and feel it deserves more attention. Thanks for doing this!
21	It has hurt my heart to see animals such as turtles, deer, and others wounded by vehicles. I once witnessed a grieving squirrel crying for hours beside a dead squirrel that I assume was its mate.
22	In Carrboro and Chapel Hill we are impacted primarily by the significant deer population. I encounter deer in the roadway while driving and biking daily, often several times a day. I and family members have been impacted by vehicle strikes. They are traumatic and costly.
23	I've had many near-misses. This is important!
24	I think this is great and long overdue. I live on a road in Carrboro where the speed limit is 20mph. Yet vehicle speed plus heavy traffic means I see dead animals on my street every day and many single-vehicle accidents. I personally witnessed a one-month old fawn be hit and killed by a driver in the middle of a clear sunny afternoon. Even roads with traffic 35mph and under are hazardous, but the proposals in the plan are a great start.
25	I TELL EVERYONE THAT PEOPLE HAVE TO WATCH OUT FOR ANIMALS. DO NOT DRIVE LIKE YOU ARE THE ONLY ENTITY IN THIS WORLD. DO NOT TAIL GATE. GO SLOWER AT NIGHT. STOP FOR TURTLES AND HELP THEM ACROSS. STOP BEING SELFISH ABOMINATIONS UPON THIS PLANET.
26	I stop to move turtles or help injured animals, it is so sad to see our state's wildlife injured on the road.
27	I see endless numbers of animals/wildlife killed on the roads. Heartbreaking.
28	I live in south Durham near the USACOE wildlife impoundment areas near New Hope Creek and Third Fork Creek. I see the evidence of wildlife-vehicle crashes often and it's very hard to see.

29	I live in a rural area of Orange County teeming with wildlife. When I drive, I'm white-knuckled watching for deer that waiting to jump out in front of my car and kill me. I wish that the sensors on my car would register them, but they seem to be oblivious to deer coming from the sides of the road. I also walk a lot on country roads, and am saddened to see so many dead animals that have been struck by cars. I especially hate that some people run over them (especially herps) on purpose. I record wildlife fatalities through iNaturalist for projects such as Wildlife Crossings, GLOBAL Roadkill Observations and Dead Herps.
30	I live beside a creek. My road crosses over it. I cannot begin to count the number of dead animals I've seen over the 35 years I've lived here. Everything from deer, of course, to possums, raccoons, skunks, barred owls (!), black vultures, box turtles, mud turtles, snapping turtles, black snakes, water snakes myriad frogs and toad -- it is heart-breaking.
31	I have not personally experienced any serious wildlife-vehicle crashes in North Carolina, but I have witnessed many roadkill deer, racoons, possums, turtles, and other animals. It's heart-wrenching to see and think about the wildlife killed by cars, and I can only imagine how harrowing it must be to be a driver who hits an animal.
32	I have never hit a deer but I see dead deer every day and it makes me very sad.
33	I have hit and killed a fawn, and have nearly hit deer many times. My husband has also hit a deer causing major damage to his car and killing the deer. We want to avoid the dangers and costs posed by wildlife crashes and we also want to preserve the lives of local wildlife as much as possible. We strongly support efforts aimed at providing safe movement and migration routes for wildlife and have hoped for measures that promote these things for many years.
34	I have had the unfortunate experience of hitting a deer that suddenly ran across the road in front of my vehicle. It caused damage to my vehicle, but I was more distressed at killing the deer. I am also one of the people you see pulling off the road (when safe to do so) to help turtles cross the road. However, I have seen cars intentionally run over turtles and snakes crossing a road when they could have easily and safely avoided running them over. Our wildlife camera captured images of a Bobcat until someone provided a photo of a dead Bobcat by the side of US 15-501 less than a mile away from the Haw River. I always wondered if that explained why the Bobcat images suddenly disappeared.
35	I have had 2 significant vehicle deer encounters, as well as many, many near hits. I would like to see the wildlife crossing plan implemented throughout the DCHC area. Thank you.

36	I have experienced multiple wildlife collisions while driving, and it is always a sad, scary, and gruesome experience, for me and especially for any children riding in the car. I also work in wildlife rehabilitation, and have seen the aftermath of so many wildlife collisions. Turtles, opossums, deer, squirrels, and raptors are frequent victims. I applaud the work that you are doing, and hope that we can reduce collisions with all of these species and build a more harmonious future for the triangle.
37	I have been lucky that a deer only grazed our car, but I am crushed that it may have been wounded. As Durham allows more deforestation and construction to foster growth, every road nearby is littered with dead animals fleeing the area.
38	I have been in a crash where a deer was hit and killed and another incident where a pheasant was killed. It is an unhappy experience and the sooner we protect these sharers of the land and environment the happier I will be. Too long coming. Glad you are finding recovery act funds to do it
39	I hate seeing squashed turtles.
40	I had 2 collisions with deer near Githens middle school and consider myself to be a careful driver who drives infrequently. What are the odds of that?! Both were somewhat traumatic as they involved death of animals and costs were incurred in both to repair my vehicles (thousands of dollars). Fortunately, I was able to pull over and no other cars were involved. In Finland, I noticed many interventions to allow for continuous pathways for animals. Honestly, I am bewildered that this idea is not part of the infrastructure and also bewildered that the light rail plan failed. Less cars seems safer and cleaner for all of us.
41	I am often anxious driving because I worry about hitting animals, especially at dawn and dusk. Investing more in wildlife crossings would address some of my concerns.
42	I always stop to move turtles off the road and do so in the safest way possible. One time a guy in a huge pickup swerved around me and smashed the turtle on purpose before I could get to it.
43	Husband had car accident with deer. Avoid crushing turtles and help them on their way (same direction they are heading) where possible but sadly can't help if the turtle is on a busy road

44	Driving home to Carrboro from Pittsboro in fall 2009, a large buck came running out of a treed area near an apartment complex and crashed into my Scion. The deer was badly injured but after a while limped into the woods and responding officers had to follow it to dispatch it. Repairing the car required leaving it at a body shop for a week. My husband and I were lucky not to be hurt, but it was very sad to see the buck suffering. I was very happy when the wildlife passage was created in 15-501 for New Hope Creek. Before then, it was horrifying to see all the animals killed trying to cross the highway there. Also near Southpoint, built through a floodplain.o
45	As a teenager in the car with family, we struck a deer crossing road at dusk.
46	A deer totaled our car, and herself. It isn't a safety issue but I am so pleased that this plan is being considered to allow smaller wildlife a safe crossing. I've seem too many people intentionally swerve to kill turtles.
47	A deer ran into the side of my car several years ago on Cole Mill Road at I-85. It caused \$2,500 in damage. I recognize the need for wildlife crossings. However, the deer in particular are everywhere in Durham. I'm not sure how you can narrow down a few locations for crossings.
48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A white-tail deer suddenly jumped on hood of car at night. • Fawns hidden among the tall grasses on the shoulder suddenly jumped into the road. • My toddler and I were stopped in one lane while someone was moving a large snapping turtle off the road. [Pond was located on one side of the road and forested area on the other side.] Both lanes of traffic were stopped in the removal process. In my rear view mirror, I saw a car going very fast over a slight hill behind my stopped car. To avoid rear-ending my car, he had to swerve off the road and onto the shoulder. He flew passed my car. We all could have been seriously harmed—even the person with the turtle.

Question #5 of the Survey:

Do you have additional feedback or comments about the draft plan?

28 responses received for this question from 129 completed surveys

49	When I'm driving and see a lot of animal bodies on the side of the road, it sets me on edge. Even though I haven't hit anything large, the fear is there, and knowing I was driving along a route that was minimizing vehicle strikes would definitely put me more at ease.
50	With the growth in our area, wildlife collisions are only going to increase as animals attempt to traverse a changing landscape. We need to provide connective corridors between large natural areas for our own human health (natural eco-system services, mental health (walking trails, wildlife viewing, etc), and for wildlife benefit - keeping common species common and protecting the food web.
51	We need to respect existing wildlife corridors and not pave them.
52	Signs of wildlife crossing is very important and helpful. Well lit areas need to be implemented.
53	Wildlife more prone to vehicle impacts when hunted (skittish) and would prioritize those areas
54	Wildlife and their mobility corridors need protection which ultimately protects citizens and minimizes crashes.
55	We used to live in Colorado where these changes were already implemented and they work. I've also seen these same plans used in Canada and they have worked there for decades. Let's do this here. I-85 in particular this is an issue. I feel like it's just a matter of time before my vehicle is impacted by wildlife and I want myself and the wildlife to be safe. My brother hit an elk in Wyoming and the damage is unbelievable and awful.
56	We have all been involved in wildlife vehicle collisions. It would be wonderful to avoid this for both humans and animals alike.
57	There are so many places on our roads where wildlife routinely tries to cross-providing safe alternative paths is absolutely necessary for conservation purposes as well as traveler safety.
58	The more we protect our wildlife, the more we protect ourselves. Drivers who avoid hitting wildlife are likely to hurt themselves and others, which is why it's so important to remove these interactions as much as possible.

59	Stories are sad and scary when one hits a deer on interstates after someone else hit it first in the dark.
60	So many smashed KILLED box turtles and other water turtles. on all our roads...even rural roads. When you have a wetlands on one side of a road and then another wet area on the other, then you see multiple dead turtles especially small ones spring and summer. More under road crossings are needed and sloped ditches leading to these passage ways. Roadside ditch depth and slope are important to avoid trapping turtles and to be able to "guide" them to a under road culvert or other. Please Check with A Turtle for Every Log and the Turtle Rescue Team at NCSU Vet school to get their ideas on location, type etc. of safe passage ways that keep turtles off the roads.
61	So many deer dangerously crossing the roads in our area. Lots of roadkill including turtles, snakes, opossums, gray foxes etc.
62	Professional environmental scientist' I understand the importance of this work.
63	Please have wildlife crossings! It's so important for living peacefully with nature. It's also much safer for us and our families!
64	People drive too fast and are distracted. People don't always see or look for road hazards, including wildlife
65	Offering a cost effective way for wildlife to cross public roadways (including and especially interstate bi-ways) is both a safe and humanitarian way to improve the lives of humans and wildlife. This survey is a first step and speaking for Western North Carolina residents this discussion is much needed and overdue. (Review I40 & I26 wildlife vehicle crash statistics)
66	No personal accidents. But see then results very often
67	Need for all safe drivers and respect on all roads to eliminate any dangers.
68	n/a
69	I've been so happy about the 15-501/New Hope Creek overpass ever since it happened, and [name withheld] told me about it. I have practically been holding my breath to see other sites be improved with the same purpose. It is crucially important to make these corridor connections for the wildlife. Knock on wood, I've not yet had a collision in my 36 years living in NC. I used to live on Phils Creek near Old Greensboro Highway, and now am just west of the Cane Creek Reservoir on Mebane Oaks Road, on what we call Caterpillar Creek. I've taught environmental classes at UNC and Elon U, and have included information about corridors with examples from other places of some beautiful crossings in my lectures.

70	I'm all about protecting wildlife. Roads/bridges and other human-made forms of moving vehicles has a devastating effect on wildlife, not just death. We as a human species who cares about creatures other than ourselves owe it to wildlife to create safe passage where we've blocked that over decades. Not just for large four-leggeds, but also smaller wildlife such as salamanders, frogs, toads and so forth. Wild Virginia has take the lead on this topic and done some fantastic work. Follow their lead (and I'm not from VA, just really impressed with their devotion and respect for the well being of wildlife. Here in NC, not so much. Sad.
71	If we can leave more areas wooded when developing new sites, I bet it would reduce crossings too. It makes me so sad to watch NC bulldoze our richly biodiverse sreas. It also helps to have lights facing down for migratory burds (even better- off in migration season).
72	I'm a fan of P-22, the beloved LA resident cougar who died in a vehicle crash. LA and other localities are building wildlife crossings like bridges, to protect wildlife from cars. If California can do it, so can N Carolina: let's follow their lead, and learn from their experience.
73	I think that this plan is a good start. It is thorough, well written and well researched. It appears that many stakeholders have been contacted. I especially like the maps, wildlife table and the list of references that are also noted in the text.
74	I think it's important that these upgraded crossings can be multiuse - I've seen people running across the Guess Rd/Eno river (continuation of trails), and at the Oxford Rd/Eno crossing (from Pennys Bend to Mountains to sea trail). An added benefit!
75	I have thankfully not been involved in a major wildlife crash.
76	I am thrilled to see this effort in Durham, Orange and Chatham Counties. As a regular cyclist and motorist, it is clear to me how many animal collisions (large and small) regularly occur. It is my hope that these projects are implemented to increase the safety of humans and wildlife.