



CALIFORNIA HIGH-SPEED RAIL: CENTRAL VALLEY 119-MILE WILDLIFE CROSSING MONITORING PROGRAM

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) is applying for a grant from Federal Highway Administration's **Wildlife Crossings Pilot Program (WCPP)** for Federal Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025. The grant will aid in analyzing, monitoring and researching safe migration of the San Joaquin kit fox and other local wildlife along the first 119 miles of high-speed rail construction. The grant funding is for projects that reduce the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions, thereby protecting motorists and improving wildlife habitat connectivity.

The Authority's requested funding would implement a non-construction Wildlife Crossing Monitoring Program (Project) to research and monitor constructed crossings implemented along the 119 miles of high-speed rail infrastructure through the Central Valley. The grant would support a five-year effort to monitor the San Joaquin kit fox (*Vulpes macrotis mutica*), as well as other wildlife in the region.

Using existing state and federal funding, the Authority has begun constructing more than 300 dedicated wildlife crossing structures to prevent collisions between wildlife and future high-speed rail trains using new high-speed rail infrastructure.

This grant would allow the Authority, working with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, the California Department of Transportation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to implement a 119-mile longitudinal, five-year monitoring study to assess these wildlife crossing structures. The monitoring program will examine the effectiveness of the crossings and generate valuable data regarding usage of the wildlife crossings and species movement patterns that will facilitate regional assessments and decisions aimed at avoiding wildlife-vehicle collisions on the roadway networks adjacent to high-speed train tracks. The outcome of the study will help determine placement and design of wildlife crossing structures on future transportation projects advanced by state, regional and local agencies. Specifically, the study will help with the following:

- Generating reliable data on the type and number of species using high-speed rail wildlife crossings and identifying wildlife movement patterns in and out of the crossing structures;
- Determining the spacing of high-speed rail crossings and refining appropriate placement of wildlife crossings within the landscape to facilitate motorist safety and wildlife movement;
- Considering size and configuration of structures used in the future, especially wildlife under-crossings; and



- Developing better forecasting tools to inform the planning, placement and design of wildlife crossing structures on the roadway networks adjacent to high-speed rail tracks.

This grant application, for approximately \$4.34 million, would be matched with state funds of nearly \$1.09 million, for a total cost of roughly \$5.43 million. Since the Project crosses several rural, disadvantaged communities, this investment ensures benefits to a region facing barriers to economic opportunities and aligns with the Biden Administration's Justice40 initiative.

In addition to protection of wildlife species, the program's desired outcomes are to improve the overall safety of the traveling public by sharing data generated from high-speed rail wildlife crossings with state and federal agencies and wildlife connectivity stakeholders to help mitigate significant safety risks related to wildlife crossing transportation infrastructure. Safety risk mitigation benefits the public by reducing repercussions for individuals impacted by accidents from wildlife-vehicle collisions, such as loss of income, medical costs, costs of repairing property damage, and declines in productivity and quality of life.

This application is part of an on-going federal-state partnership that, to date, has provided approximately \$28.7 billion in funding for California High-Speed Rail (\$21.9 billion / 76% state and \$6.8 billion / 24% federal). California is the only state in the country to have committed this level of funding to modernizing rail, and the Authority is asking the federal government to match this level of commitment with strong grant support of the project with Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding. This federal-state partnership has provided vital financial support and significant job opportunities in disadvantaged Central Valley communities.