# REPORT

**DATE**: May 7, 2015

**TO**: General Assembly (GA)

**FROM**: Regional Council (RC)

SUBJECT: Proposed Resolution for Consideration by the General Assembly – Wildlife Corridor Across the Ventura Freeway (US 101) at Liberty Canyon

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL: Hosas Wehuth

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** As recommended by the Regional Council, that the General Assembly review and adopt a proposed resolution regarding support for a wildlife corridor across the Ventura Freeway (US 101) at Liberty Canyon.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The SCAG Bylaws provide the opportunity for any Official Representative of SCAG to propose any policy matter for action by the General Assembly by way of submittal of a resolution. Ventura County Supervisor Linda Parks has proposed for the General Assembly's consideration, a resolution in support of endorsing a plan to build a wildlife corridor across the Ventura Freeway at Liberty Canyon ("Wildlife Corridor"). Information regarding the proposed Wildlife Corridor was presented last October 2014 to SCAG's Energy and Environment Committee. Several organizations and agencies, including the State of California Coastal Conservancy; the National Park Service; the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy; the Ventura County Board of Supervisors; and the cities of Thousand Oaks, Malibu, Agoura Hills and Calabasas have joined together in support of the Wildlife Corridor. On March 5, 2015, the Regional Council reviewed the proposed resolution and recommended its adoption by the General Assembly.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:** This item supports SCAG's Strategic Plan Goal 1 (Improve Regional Decision Making by Providing Leadership and Consensus Building on Key Plans and Policies), Objective c (Provide practical solutions for moving new ideas forward).

# **BACKGROUND:**

The SCAG Bylaws provides the opportunity for any Official Representatives of SCAG to propose any policy matter for action by the General Assembly by way of submittal of a resolution. Ventura County Supervisor Parks has proposed that the General Assembly approve a resolution in support of endorsing a plan to build a wildlife corridor across the Ventura Freeway (101 freeway) at Liberty Canyon. As background, last October, Paul Edelman, Chief of Natural Resources and Planning for the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), gave a presentation before SCAG's Energy and Environment Committee describing the need for creating a wildlife bridge over the 101 freeway in Agoura Hills. The presentation covered the status and costs of the proposal and provided examples of similar bridges in the United States and around the world.

This proposed General Assembly resolution from Supervisor Park would be in support of the Wildlife Corridor, and seeks to address the 2012-2035 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Community Strategy (2012 RTP/SCS) directive to "ensure access to open space and habitat preservation despite



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competing quality of life demands driven by growth, housing and employment needs, and traditional development patterns." Several organizations and agencies have joined together in support of the Wildlife Corridor proposal. These include the following: the State of California Coastal Conservancy; the National Park Service; the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy; the State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans); the Ventura Council of Governments; the Ventura County Board of Supervisors; and the cities of Thousand Oaks, Malibu, Agoura Hills and Calabasas. Funding from bond proceeds for the initial planning stages of the Wildlife Corridor has been provided by the California Coastal Conservancy, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board.

On February 18, 2015, the Bylaws & Resolutions Committee reviewed the proposed resolution and by a unanimous vote, formally recommended to the Regional Council that it recommend that the General Assembly adopt the resolution. Similarly, the Regional Council reviewed the proposed resolution on March 5, 2015 and also formally recommended its adoption by the General Assembly.

## **ATTACHMENT**:

Proposed General Assembly resolution in support of endorsing a plan to build a Wildlife Corridor across the Ventura Freeway (US 101) at Liberty Canyon





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### **RESOLUTION NO. GA 2015-1**

# A RESOLUTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS IN SUPPORT OF ENDORSING A PLAN TO BUILD A WILDLIFE CORRIDOR ACROSS THE VENTURA FREEWAY (US 101) AT LIBERTY CANYON

WHEREAS, the Santa Monica Mountains are located within the counties of Los Angeles and Ventura, and protecting its parklands and ecosystem and encouraging recreational use is critical to maintaining the economic and social values of Southern California residents, and is consistent with the Southern California Association of Governments' goals of conservation, public health, and sustainability overall;

WHEREAS, the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area attracts 33 million visitors a year, generating \$26 million from visitors who come to enjoy the flora and fauna of these parklands that are also experiencing loss of wildlife due to urban encroachment, roads and highways;

WHEREAS, an alliance of regional and national organizations and agencies has come together to express support for building a wildlife corridor crossing US 101 at Liberty Canyon to enable wildlife to safely move from the Santa Monica Mountains to other natural areas, increase the genetic diversity of animals that would otherwise become extinct in this mountain range, and increase the safety of motorists by reducing vehicle collisions with animals;

WHEREAS, the growing alliance of organizations and agencies that has joined together to support building a wildlife corridor across US 101 at Liberty Canyon includes the State of California Coastal Conservancy, the National Park Service, Caltrans, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, the Ventura Council of Governments, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, the National Wildlife Foundation, the Wildlife Conservation Board, and the Resource Conservation District of the Santa Monica Mountains Fund, as well as the cities of Thousand Oaks, Malibu, Agoura Hills, and Calabasas;

WHEREAS, the State of California Coastal Conservancy, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and the Wildlife Conservation Board have provided funding through bond money for initial planning stages of the wildlife corridor; WHEREAS, the 2012–2035 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS) seeks to minimize transportation-related impacts on wildlife and better integrate transportation infrastructure into the environment; and

WHEREAS, the RTP/SCS includes as examples of resource mitigation measures for habitat enhancement such as improving/retaining habitat linkages, preserving wildlife corridors and wildlife crossings to minimize the impact of transportation projects on wildlife species and habitat fragmentation; and

**WHEREAS**, a wildlife corridor meets specific goals of the 2012 Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, including Goal 3: Ensure Travel Safety and Reliability for all People and Goods in the Region, and Goal 4: Preserve and Ensure a Sustainable Regional Transportation Program.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS DOES HEREBY RESOLVE to endorse a project to build a wildlife corridor across US 101 at Liberty Canyon in order to help preserve genetic diversity and in that way protect the Santa Monica Mountains' parklands and ecosystem which are critical to maintaining economic and social values of California residents, and in order to promote roadway safety for motorists.

**PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED** at the Annual Meeting of the General Assembly of the Southern California Association of Governments held on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2015.

Hon. Carl E. Morehouse President, SCAG Councilmember, City of San Buenaventura

Attested by:

Hasan Ikhrata, Executive Director

Approved as to Form:

Joann Africa, Chief Counsel