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Kentucky Receives \$1.2 Million Grant to Help Reduce Vehicle Collisions Involving Wildlife

Funds will support a wildlife-vehicle collision reduction plan and a regional pilot study to identify factors that lead to crashes

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Dec. 8, 2023) – Kentucky is one of 17 states to receive a new federal grant aimed at making roadways safer for people and wildlife. The \$1.2 million award will fund a wildlife-vehicle collision reduction plan and a pilot study in central Kentucky to identify links between crashes and environmental factors.

The Wildlife Crossings Program competitive grant was issued to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) by the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Highway Administration and is the product of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that pumped new funding to states for infrastructure projects that improve safety and quality of life.

“This funding will help us identify ways we can make our roadways safer for our families,” said Gov. Andy Beshear. “The ultimate goal is to protect travelers and to protect Kentucky wildlife.”

KYTC submitted the grant, in partnership with the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, to develop Kentucky’s first Wildlife-Vehicle Collision (WVC) Reduction Plan to identify crash factors and potential solutions to reduce collisions. As part of the plan, a pilot corridor study will be completed to evaluate U.S. 60 and Interstate 64 segments between Louisville and Frankfort. KYTC will collect wildlife and roadway data to identify key areas where road expansions and high traffic volumes intersect with wildlife habitats and migration routes. The U.S. 60/ I-64 corridor was selected as a focus area due to a high number of annual deer crashes.

“We’re excited to build upon our existing efforts to improve highway safety and prevent crashes with wildlife,” said KYTC Secretary Jim Gray. “With these funds, we’ll be able to take a deep dive into data to make informed conclusions and develop a collaborative system to report and identify priority corridors.”

“The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife is pleased to partner with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet on their proposal to study wildlife-vehicle collisions in Kentucky,” said Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources Commissioner Rich Storm. “Encounters with deer and other wildlife occur

frequently along the I-64 corridor between Louisville and Frankfort making this an excellent focal point for this project. Wildlife vehicle collisions, particularly those involving deer, pose a significant risk to Kentucky motorists. We applaud the Transportation Cabinet for taking the initiative to reduce these wildlife-vehicle collisions and improve habitat connectivity in Kentucky.

Last year in Kentucky, there were approximately 3,000 reported deer collisions statewide. In addition to issuing annual “Antler Alerts” every fall to warn drivers of the likelihood of encountering deer on the move, KYTC’s other measures to enhance road safety and reduce the likelihood of deer collisions include more than 1,000 deer crossing signs along select state-maintained routes. The state has also adopted a reduced mowing schedule that not only helps nurture critical roadside pollinator plots across Kentucky, but the less frequent mowing can also minimize the abundance of freshly cut grass along the interstate, which is a common attractant for deer.

“We care about those riding on four wheels or trotting on four legs as part of our mission to maintain a safe and environmentally sound transportation system,” said KYTC State Highway Engineer James Ballinger. “Completing this study will give us a great baseline to build from and to help guide future decision making.”

The study and plan are expected to begin in the summer of 2024.

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