

# REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

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DATE: October 5, 2015

TO: Honorable Members of the Rules, Elections, Intergovernmental Relations, and  
Neighborhoods Committee

FROM: Sharon M. Tso *Matia Tso for* Council File No.: 15-0002-S102  
Chief Legislative Analyst Assignment No.: 15-09-0763

SUBJECT: Proposed U.S. 101 Wildlife Corridor.

CLA RECOMMENDATION: Adopt the attached Resolution (Blumenfield-O'Farrell) to include in the City's 2015-16 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for the proposal by the California Department of Transportation to construct a landscaped wildlife corridor bridge over the U.S. 101 Freeway at Liberty Canyon Road in the City of Agoura Hills.

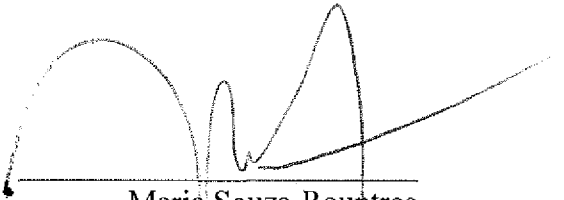
## SUMMARY

Urbanization has significantly affected Southern California's mountain lion population, spurring battles over shrinking territory and a depletion of genetic diversity because of inbreeding. In particular, the region's freeways have posed dangerous barriers for mountain lions and other animals by dividing once-continuous wildlife habitats. Since the National Park Service biologists began researching mountain lions in the Santa Monica Mountains in 2002, motorists have struck and killed a dozen of the animals in the study area. National Park Service (NPS) researchers have documented serious threats to the long-term viability of the mountain lions if a wildlife corridor is not constructed. Scientists have identified Liberty Canyon Road in the City of Agoura Hills as the optimal location to build a wildlife passage because of the acres of protected public land on either side of the freeway.

On September 3, 2015, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), a joint powers agency that includes the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), the Conejo Recreation and Park District, and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District, announced the release of a proposal prepared by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to evaluate the feasibility and cost of a proposed dedicated wildlife passage across US-101 near Liberty Canyon. The Project Study Report (PSR), funded by the MRCA with a \$200,000 grant from the SMMC, is the first step in the creation of a wildlife passage across the eight-lane freeway. The PSR proposes a crossing that would consist of a 165-foot wide by 200-foot long bridge spanning across the freeway with columns on spread footings in the freeway median and retaining walls on either end. The bridge would be landscaped with native, drought-tolerant vegetation to provide a passage that resembles the natural habitat. Noise barriers would reduce traffic noise and block vehicle light at night in order to make the crossing more effective for wildlife. The ultimate details and environmental impacts of this continuation will be considered by the City of Agoura Hills through a combination of public hearings and/or community outreach workshops. The Caltrans study concludes that a wildlife overpass is feasible and would be projected to cost \$33 million to \$38 million.

The report was the necessary first step toward a final design. Caltrans is expected soon to begin

preparing the required environmental document, to be funded by a \$1-million grant from the State Coastal Conservancy. The public would be asked to weigh in during this phase, which would run through 2017. Other funding is being sought for the remaining \$3 million for the final design plans. The National Wildlife Federation and the Santa Monica Mountains Fund have launched an initiative to raise funds for the engineering design and construction expenses.



Maria Souza-Rountree  
Analyst

Attachment:  
1. Resolution

SMT:msr

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, any official position of the City of Los Angeles with respect to legislation, rules, regulations or policies proposed to or pending before a local, state or federal governmental body or agency must have first been adopted in the form of a Resolution by the City Council with the concurrence of the Mayor; and

WHEREAS, for years, mountain lions and other animals have been threatened by the dangerous and imposing barrier of the U.S. 101 and other freeways that divide once-continuous wildlife habitats; and

WHEREAS, since National Park Service biologists began researching mountain lions in the Santa Monica Mountains in 2002, motorists have struck and killed a dozen of the animals in the study area; and

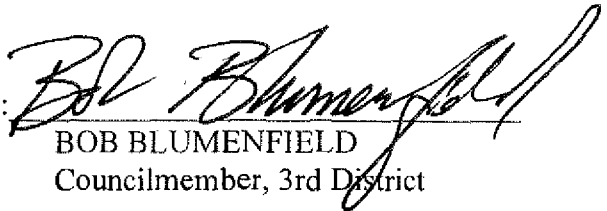
WHEREAS, researchers have identified the area near Liberty Canyon Road in Agoura Hills as a critical location for a wildlife corridor that would connect the Santa Monica Mountains on the south with the Simi Hills and Santa Susana Mountains; and

WHEREAS, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) recently released a study that concluded that a 165-foot-wide, 200-foot-long wildlife corridor overpass at Liberty Canyon road was feasible; and

WHEREAS, the next step will be to undertake an environmental impact document, which will be funded by a \$1 million grant from the State Coastal Conservancy;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, with the concurrence of the Mayor, that by the adoption of this Resolution, the City of Los Angeles hereby includes in its 2015-16 State Legislative Program SUPPORT for the proposal by the California Department of Transportation to construct a landscaped wildlife corridor bridge over the U.S. 101 Freeway in Agoura Hills.

PRESENTED BY:

  
 BOB BLUMENFIELD  
 Councilmember, 3rd District

SECONDED BY:

