



Citizens  
Against  
Ruining the  
Environment

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To Whom it May Concern:

Re: Wildlife/Vehicle Accidents

Seems like everywhere we went in Chicagoland last summer we were faced with road construction: widening roads, re-paving roads, repairing bridges and other infrastructure, etc. While the benefits are great, the inconvenience to drivers while the work is taking place can be a royal pain in the butt.

Unfortunately, while we humans eventually reap benefits from the roadwork, the animals where the construction takes place rarely do. Man-made barriers, some temporary, some very permanent, disrupt the animals' normal movement/migration patterns. New traffic patterns, easily understood by those of us who can read signs, can be death traps for animals. Additionally, the improvements to our roads can diminish, if not totally destroy, the animals' natural habitat.

It doesn't have to be like that. There happens to be a document - The Wildlife Crossing Handbook FHWA-CFL/TD-11-003, dated March 2011 and written by Anthony P. Clevenger and Marcel P. Huijser - that discusses options for construction roadwork that is beneficial to both humans and animals. If IDOT (Illinois Department of Transportation) follows all federal guidelines in order to qualify for federal money, then the cost for some of these options should be budgeted into the cost of the project.

And what, you may be asking, are some of these options? Well, first of all what are wildlife crossing overpasses. Every now and then pictures of them pop up on Facebook and they look downright awesome. They can be found in some of our western states, they abound in Canada, and in many European countries they are common. Even some Eastern European countries, which were under communism for almost fifty years, have wildlife overpasses. Illinois has none. IDOT says there's no money in their budgets for an overpass. Okay. Point taken.

An overpass system would be extremely expensive. Another option: pipes of various sizes for the smaller animals to crawl through. This isn't an ideal situation because it does nothing whatsoever to protect deer, but it does save some of the smaller animals and it isn't an outrageously expensive endeavor. Being from Homer Glen I made a point of checking to see

whether or not any wildlife pipes were in the Homer Glen area. I was told there were eight wildlife pipes of various sizes under the road between 108th Avenue and Bell Road.

. IDOT could not locate any pipes west of Bell Road. Indiana seems to be a bit more advanced than Illinois in regard to protecting wildlife from roadway traffic. They've installed sensors along their roadways that set off a series of flashing yellow lights if anything - animal or human - were to come onto the roadway. Motorists would then know to keep their eyes open and, hopefully, avoid an accident. IDOT says they can't afford the flashing lights, either. An IDOT analysis report can pinpoint precisely where most animal/vehicle accidents take place, but even very selective placement of warning lights is beyond IDOT's scope.

That brings us to the final, and most elementary, option for wildlife roadway protection: signage. We've all seen wildlife crossing signs, but chances are they weren't erected by IDOT. The IDOT manager in charge of wildlife crossing signs, Cory Julius (847-705-4411), said IDOT stopped erecting wildlife crossing signs sometime back in the 1970's because motorists simply tuned out the signs and IDOT felt they were a waste of money. The Village of Homer Glen formally requested signage and was rejected, as was the request for signage on the 143rd street project.

IDOT is not held accountable to any Federal agency for their federal money. They must and should follow the Wildlife Crossing Handbook, but they don't. WCDOT (Will County Department of Transportation), who gets money from IDOT for their roadway projects, is also supposed to follow all federal guidelines, but they don't.

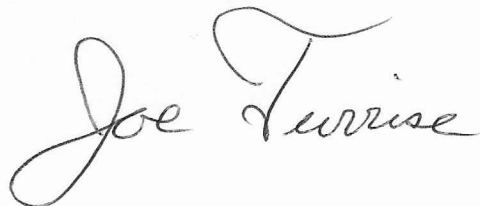
From a Chicago Tribune article published in 2016, there were 1.2 million deer vehicle crashes annually in the US resulting in 29,000 human injuries, 200 deaths, and \$166 billion in property damage. Illinois reported 15,000 road related accidents. Sadly, the refusal to take any step whatsoever to protect wildlife, particularly in the case of deer, is to practice an inhumane method of culling deer, boost auto insurance premiums, and enrich local body shops.

Wildlife/vehicle accidents can't be totally eliminated, but shouldn't we be doing SOMETHING to reduce the number of accidents?

Citizens Against Ruining the Environment ~ C.A.R.E.

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