

March 31, 2018

Re: Safe Passage on Highway 97

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter in support of the Safe Passage on Highway 97 Project. The Central Washington Latino Community Fund supports the protection of wildlife natural resources, but this project has the more immediate benefit of greatly improving transportation safety in a highway corridor that is critical to our community.

The Latino community has a long history in the Okanogan Valley and is well established and distributed. The Safe Passage on Highway 97 Project is proposed along this corridor that many Latino community members travel every day, to and from work, schools, and to recreate. We join with the Colville Confederated Tribes, Conservation Northwest, the Mule Deer Foundation and many other local partners and community members in support of this project.

The Washington Department of Transportation has identified the 12 mile stretch of Highway 97 between Riverside and the Janis Bridge south of Tonasket as one of the highest car deer collision zones in the state. Approximately 350 vehicle-deer collisions occur on this section of highway every year with. Many hit deer remain on the highway, creating further safety issues while others struggle away to later die on surrounding properties. This is a major concern not only for public safety but also for wildlife.

As a partner of the Safe Passage on Highway 97 Project we support the construction, operation and monitoring of wildlife underpasses, fences, and other pertinent structures that will be completed as part of this proposal. The construction and implementation of wildlife underpasses is in line with our organization's vision and mission to advocate for environmental justice and climate justice policies. Underpasses will keep the landscape permeable for the free movement of deer and other wildlife as climate change affects their ecology.

We look forward to participating in this program, promoting healthy working relationships with legislators, state and federal agencies, private landowners and nonprofit organizations, and continuing our leadership in advocating for the environment and for the safety and well-being of our community.

Sincerely,



Micaela Razo  
Central Washington Manager