

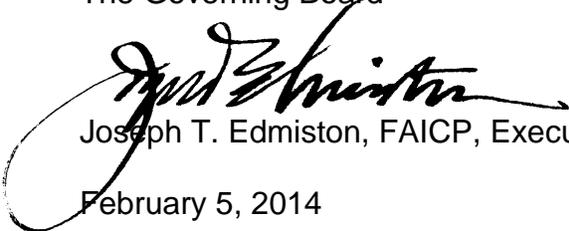


# MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Officer

DATE: February 5, 2014

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item VII: Consideration of resolution authorizing submission of a grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for project planning and design regarding implementation of a wildlife crossing structure on the 101 freeway at Liberty Canyon, Agoura Hills.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing submission of a grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy for project planning and design in an amount not to exceed \$200,000 for the implementation of a wildlife crossing structure on the 101 freeway at Liberty Canyon, Agoura Hills.

Background: The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) owns the two key parcels on either side of 101 Freeway at Liberty Canyon in the optimal places both for a wildlife tunnel or overpass. At a recent multi-agency meeting, a consensus was reached that a dedicated wildlife overpass would be the superior freeway crossing structure to serve all species. This is a departure from agency efforts to work with Caltrans on a 310-foot-long and 13-foot-wide underpass.

No serious Liberty Canyon wildlife crossing structure planning and design can move forward with Caltrans without the preparation of a Planning Study Report (PSR). A PSR forms the baseline that allows Caltrans to move forward with engineering and environmental clearance. Each of these steps will move the project closer to being poised for some combination of public and private financing. The PSR would probably take a year.

The genetic integrity and population stability of the wildlife in both the Santa Monica Mountains and the Simi Hills is of regional significance. To assure the ecological richness of the hundreds of millions of dollars worth of public open space for centuries, the highest function freeway crossing structure is warranted.

Staff is seeking authorization to submit a project planning and design grant application to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to enable the MRCA to pursue a PSR with Caltrans via a cooperative agreement with Caltrans.

Staff has been working with a team of Caltrans personnel to understand the process. The selected grant application amount of \$200,000 should provide the funding necessary to pay the Caltrans staff to do the work and to pay a contractor initially for design concepts to feed to Caltrans to keep Caltrans' study effort on alternatives within a range that guarantees the optimal scope and scale of a crossing structure.

A budget of \$200,000 probably contains a small percentage of contingency. However, to assure completion of the process, the Superintendent of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is working on securing an increment of additional funding for the PSR or the next step in the Caltrans approval and design process.