

DENVER AND THE WEST

Design selected for I-70 wildlife crossing near Vail

By **Jessica Fender**
The Denver Post

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Calling it a potential "model for the world," a panel of architects and engineers Sunday picked a New York firm's design for a wildlife crossing over Interstate 70 near Vail from an international field of 36 teams.

The ARC International Wildlife Crossing Infrastructure Design Competition was aimed to help prevent collisions between cars and wildlife wandering onto I-70.

Bear, bobcat, coyote, deer, elk, big-horn sheep and lynx are among the species involved in vehicle-animal collisions on Colorado roads, according to the Colorado Department of Transportation.

The crossing, designed by HNTB with Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, features a built-in drainage system, affordable materials and an easy-to-construct design that would allow crews to build it without shutting down traffic in both directions.

Its broad expanse, chosen unanimously by the five-person panel, is covered in trees, grasses and shrubs to blend in with the natural habitat on either side of the interstate.

"We have the technical expertise and the know-how to overcome design challenges and implement cutting-edge survival practices" said Charles Waldheim, chairman of the ARC jury. "What we really need now is the political, economic and social leadership to bring this design to life."

The stretch of I-70 — a challenge for its steep terrain, frequently high traffic volume and weather — won't be getting the new wildlife crossing any time soon. The cash-strapped CDOT has said it does not have the money to fund such a project.

Jessica Fender: 303-954-1244 or jfender@denverpost.com



A rendering shows an aerial view of a proposed wildlife overpass on Interstate 70 near Vail. The crossing is aimed to prevent car-animal collisions. (ARC Project via The New York Times)

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NorCalPeaceKeeper wrote:

jiminlittleton wrote:I didn't see where there would be signs in the various animal languages of when and where to cross. It's a wonderful idea, I just got a new car and will be travelling over Vail Pass in March and certainly don't want any grilled venison when I do. It's amazing what liberals can think of when the state is bankrupt, and this country is \$14TRILLION in debt. I was thinking it may be cheaper to allow hunting from one's car along that stretch...

They already do this in Canada. They say it works well for both saving money and (human) lives from averted accidents.

Good point!

There were 31,824 recorded incidents of wildlife-vehicle collisions along state and interstate highways between 1993 and 2005. The number of wildlife-vehicle collisions reported by Colorado State Patrol (CSP) is known to underestimate the actual number of animals killed because it only represents accidents actually reported. The CDOT has begun collecting

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data from maintenance patrols on the number of wild animals killed and removed from the roads. Preliminary maintenance patrol roadkill counts show that roughly twice as many animals are killed as are reported to CSP. This data will serve as a supplement to CSP crash data in the future.

A study released in August 2004 by the Center for Disease Control found that one quarter of all animal-vehicle collisions that result in human injury nationwide occur in October and November. Animal-vehicle collisions can also result in human fatalities. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that accidents involving animals cause 200 deaths per year nationwide. From 1993 through 2005, 29 people died on Colorado highways in traffic crashes involving wild animals.




Even when collisions with animals are not fatal for drivers, they often result in injury and can cause expensive damage to vehicles and other personal property. During the 11 years from 1993 through 2003, statistics from CDOT show that there were 22,387 animal-vehicle collisions resulting in property damage on Colorado roadways. The Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association (RMIIA) reports that the average cost per claim was \$2,800.

http://www.restoretherockies.org/on_the_move.htm




 D. T | 10:17 AM on Wednesday Jan 26 | [Reply to this comment](#)
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Do you think a guy could put a tree stand there?




hahaha

 paul h | 5:35 PM on Tuesday Jan 25 | [Reply to this comment](#)
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I hope that SOMEONE bothered to study migration paths of animals in the area? Animals won't use the bridge unless it's in the migration path.


 Large M | 8:14 AM on Tuesday Jan 25 | [Reply to this comment](#)
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This state is HOW much in the hole???
And the libraterds what to spend how much for this Nonsense???
The only thing here Stupider than this Idea are the rabid Nut Cases trying to Defend such a stupid idea.
More than likely it will become one of Colo's famous Affirmative Action Bids . Most likely Alvarado Construction, remember them screwing up DIA massive over runs and shoddy workmanship.
In short ,How to turn a Joke into a fiscal nightmare.
Want to pi\$\$ off some money try fixing some potholes.


 Bonzo Smith | 6:08 PM on Monday Jan 24 | [Reply to this comment](#)
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The photo accompanying this article clearly confirms visitations to this planet by alien cultures thousands of years ago.






 Richard Schneider | 5:24 PM on Monday Jan 24 | [Reply to this comment](#)
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- Littwin: So hateful, even Sarah Palin won't come here?  46
- Editorial: Don't give feds power over 'Net  21
- Editorial: What's in a name change?  18


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- Arizona lawmakers mull automatic citizenship bill  65
- Denver gas prices up 3.4 cents  32
- Undercover video seeks to discredit Planned Parenthood  30
- Man shoots self in Cherry Creek North boutique  23
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- The White Stripes announce they're breaking up  12
- Making Denver's East Colfax Avenue better (but not too much better)  10
- Aguilera repeats line of national anthem  6
- CBS4 reporter Dominic Garcia is back home  3
- 'Last Tango in Paris' star Maria Schneider dies  3

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- Krieger: Finances may sway Broncos  54
- Peter Forsberg's Avalanche debut may be delayed by visa issues  25
- Broncos could learn from the Packers and Steelers how to draft  13
- Q&A: Broncos need defense first on road to recovery  10

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jiminlitleton wrote: I was thinking it may be cheaper to allow hunting from one's car along that stretch...

No doubt the wildlife-vehicle interactions would go down once your idea of open season on drivers is implemented. Thumbs up!!



Dale P | 4:59 PM on Monday Jan 24 | [Reply to this comment](#)



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denverandy wrote: These types of overpasses do work; below is a link to an existing one over I-78 near Berkley Heights, NJ.

Photo:

[url]
[http://maps.google.com/maps?oe=utf-8&cl ... 5&t=k&z=18/\[url\]](http://maps.google.com/maps?oe=utf-8&cl ... 5&t=k&z=18/[url])

Thanks for the link.

I zoomed in on that crossing and actually saw a couple of squirrels, a rabbit, a family of moles and a roadrunner (being chased by a wolf, of course) using it.

It's amazing how quickly word spreads throughout the wildlife community about the existence of these crossings after they're built.

All us humans need to do is just continue to build them. It shows our respect for the wild lives of wildlife, and they sense our respect for them too!



James G | 1:29 PM on Monday Jan 24 | [Reply to this comment](#)



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These types of overpasses do work; below is a link to an existing one over I-78 near Berkley Heights, NJ.

Photo:

[url]
[http://maps.google.com/maps?oe=utf-8&cl ... 5&t=k&z=18/\[url\]](http://maps.google.com/maps?oe=utf-8&cl ... 5&t=k&z=18/[url])



Denver Andy | 1:17 PM on Monday Jan 24 | [Reply to this comment](#)



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Taxed too much wrote: No doubt. A 50 foot wide animal crossing is going to significantly reduce vehicle-animal encounters on a 150 mile stretch of highway. I'm sure the elk and deer from Evergreen are going to travel all the way to Vail so that they can safely cross the highway. :roll:

64trout wrote: Perhaps the insurance industry - motor vehicle, and even health and life insurance - should chip in for the project. They will stand to benefit considerably from the lessening of animal/vehicle collisions at highway speed.

At the risk of adding facts to the discussion, and you not liking them, and you consequently down-thumbing my post and calling me by various labels, I would like to remind everyone that there are miles and miles of elk fence along I-70, greatly restricting the ability of wildlife to just cross anywhere. But some still try to cross the Interstate - it is their instinct to move and migrate. Some succeed, while others get trapped inbetween the fences. Thus, there are numerous ramp structures built to let the lucky ones that don't get hit up and out of the fenced-in area. No, animals in Evergreen are probably not going to travel to Vail for the express purpose of crossing I-70, but it is very common for roving animals, (even livestock) when they meet with an obstacle, to move along the obstacle - sometimes for miles - until they encounter an opportunity to cross. Tell us, do

you oppose the miles and miles of elk fencing already in place? Do you oppose migration? Do you think land animals should just learn to deal more constructively with their instincts to migrate and, in the case of some, their need for large territories? If you were responsible for maintaining an Interstate through mountainous country filled with tens of thousands of large migrating animals, and for the safety of the motorists who travel on that interstate, what are your ideas for reducing collisions? See [http://www.vaildaily.com/article/200612 ... /112070049](http://www.vaildaily.com/article/200612.../112070049)



T H | 12:37 PM on Monday Jan 24 | [Reply to this comment](#)



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How are they going to ensure the wildlife knows to appreciate their brilliance?



Stephen S | 12:37 PM on Monday Jan 24 | [Reply to this comment](#)



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Taxed too much wrote: I asked you to prove that wildlife will not continue to cross the road where and when they feel like it. You can't answer that simple question.

I'll try it again. Prove to me that wildlife will not continue to cross the highway at times and places of their choosing if we build this structure. Please use facts and sources to back up your assertion, not opinions and hearsay.

As usual people with nothing claim those that disagree with them are short on fact - a sweet comedy skit, especially knowing Mr Terra, who crowds the threads with charts and graphs.

But that's OK, lad. What do you want me to prove? You don't know squat about wildlife crossings? Or officials get their info from wildlife biologists and not ignorami? Or the structure will get built when funding comes available?

Which is it? Not knowing squat, electeds [SIC] ignore ignoramuses over wildlife biologists, or the structure?

Taxed, nothing 'guarantees' wildlife won't cross in other areas, just as a guardrail or jersey bunker can't guarantee a vehicle won't cross that barrier. This crossing is rooted in statistics. Statistics that demonstrate this particularly corridor is the largest, confined migratory route in the vicinity, and if a large percentage of the migratory population uses this crossing, (assume 90% for sake of argument - which can be demonstrated using statistics), that decreases the risk that motorists might hit a migratory animal crossing the highway by the same amount, or said another way, increases a motorists statistical safety.

Calculating risk is how much of the modern world operates, in case you don't have any insurance, or don't understand how and why we pay for a standing military and were wondering.



Barney Rubble | 12:12 PM on Monday Jan 24 | [Reply to this comment](#)



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NorCalPeaceKeeper wrote: Actually, that's not at all what I learned from reading your post. In fact, expressing your views only reinforced what the poster was saying.

Of course you didn't. You already have a preconceived idea in your head that this is good. therefore considering another point of view would never occur to you.

1) A pessimistic or sarcastic tone about animals using a "crosswalk" tells me you think you're funny but in reality are a short-sighted ignorant SOB. Wild animals will travel the path of least human resistance and one that feels more natural. That's not only common sense but has also been demonstrated by the successful implementation of similar projects in Canada.

Name calling is the sign of a losing argument. A bridge over a highway covered with vegetation is not "natural". I'm not arrogant enough to presume that I know what animals think and feel.

2) While it would be nice to drive down a highway without encountering a "project", SB is right - maintenance and upgrades are necessary to avoid the exponentially greater cost of repairs. That's just reality.

Minimum maintenance agreed. Unnecessary projects, disagreed.

3) 10 years of steady jobs = 10 years of inconvenience to you? According to the article the project won't even impact your commute.

I would hope they could get a project done in less than 10 years.

4) Again, a mocking and contemptuous attitude toward a legitimate discussion topic. Animals obviously aren't going to pay a fee, but if you knew anything about the value of tourism you wouldn't be so cynical. Projects like this gives the rest of the country the impression that your community cares about it's surroundings and it's wildlife. Since wildlife advocates and enthusiasts generate millions if not billions of dollars annually to the tourism industry, turning a blind eye and mocking the value of attracting tourists reflects the degree of your ignorance.

I'm sure the rest of the country is really going to have a wildlife overpass on their mind when they think about Colorado. "Hey, honey, let's take a vacation trip to Colorado so we can see that lovely migratory overpass!" Yeah, that's it./

5) One crossing out of 150 miles certainly isn't the end-all to curtailing collisions. Thinking ahead however, do you really think another wouldn't be constructed?

Hopefully not. It is a waste of money and resources that could be better spent elsewhere. Unless you're going to make a tunnel the length of I-70 there's going to be animals crossing the road.

6) Jesus, are you seriously scoffing at the value of creating jobs in this economy? That pessimistic attitude must be a joy to be around...

These types of jobs? Yes. Good paying private sector jobs that actually add to the economy, no. I wouldn't be a joy for you to be around because I live in the real world, not some fantasy land.



Enough Taxes | 12:08 PM on Monday Jan 24 | Reply to this comment



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Taxed too much wrote: I asked you to prove that wildlife will not continue to cross the road where and when they feel like it. You can't answer that simple question.

I'll try it again. Prove to me that wildlife will not continue to cross the highway at times and places of their choosing if we build this structure. Please use facts and sources to back up your assertion, not opinions and hearsay.

If you had actually asked the underlined, there would be no need for a clarifying question, and no need for your comical assertion that I can't ask a simple question. But thanks for the nice laugh at the stumbling and thrashing about for play. I needed that laugh.

Comical and inept thrashing about aside, according to a more detailed arty in a better paper [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/24/science/earth/24overpass.html?_r=1] there are indeed collisions in that spot, but the point is to alleviate habitat fragmentation by roads.

And there is a well-studied overcrossing in Banff <http://biology.ucf.edu/~rnoess/papers/Clevenger%20and%20Waltho%202005.pdf> , a literature review in a DOT doc studying them in MT http://www.mdt.mt.gov/research/docs/research_proj/wildlife_crossing/final_report.pdf , and an entire manual from our FHWA about them in Yurp http://international.fhwa.dot.gov/wildlife_web.htm.

I doubt certain commenters here want to expand their narrow knowledge base, but for others these are a decent place to start.

Anyone taking natural science, wildlife biology, or ecology classes likely has studied the various types of road crossing structures, as roads are major fragmenters of habitat, a major concern for the natural sciences.

HTH.



Warren Terra | 12:03 PM on Monday Jan 24 | [Reply to this comment](#)



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This looks eerily, way too similar to the proposal in the early '90's to use a cut-n-cover tunnel to reclaim the highway corridor through Vail. Whatever happened to that concept? The difference of course is in the earlier Vail project the reclaimed lands was worth three times more than the construction costs thereby making it financially feasible.



Barney Rubble | 12:02 PM on Monday Jan 24 | [Reply to this comment](#)



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Well there you go.
The Cardinal with the red beanie, Warren T. erra indeed is expert of exerts on everything.
But mainly cutting and pasting
and taking up a lot of space.
Huuuurpph !!!



Gene H | 12:01 PM on Monday Jan 24 | [Reply to this comment](#)



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I thought there was a problem with vehicle/animal collisions. That seems to be part of the case for this "necessity". Now you're telling me they don't cross the highway? Which is it?

I would guess that they cross I-70 more than you or I know, particularly at night when traffic is minimized and most people don't notice them.

dude_chill wrote:

Taxed too much wrote: I asked you to prove that wildlife will not continue to cross the road where and when they feel like it. You can't answer that simple question.

I'll try it again. Prove to me that wildlife will not continue to cross the highway at times and places of their choosing if we build this structure. Please use facts and sources to back up your assertion, not opinions and hearsay.

They currently DON'T cross I-70. That is the point. I've never seen an animal collision over Vail Pass. They stay on one side and never migrate to the other. The purpose of this bridge is so they WILL START crossing it and increasing their migration.



Enough Taxes | 11:57 AM on Monday Jan 24 | [Reply to this comment](#)



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