***SAMPLE***

DATE

The Honorable Gavin Newsom

Governor, State of California

1303 10th Street, Suite 1173

Sacramento, CA 95814

Toks Omishakin

Director, Caltrans

C-151120N Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Brightline West High-Speed Rail Project – Wildlife Crossings**

Governor Newsom and Director Omishakin,

I strongly urge you to require Brightline West (Brightline) construct three wildlife overcrossings as part of its high-speed rail project connecting Victorville, California with Las Vegas, Nevada.

As currently designed, the project will erect a 170-mile barrier of concrete wall topped by chain-link fences that will impede wildlife from ancient pathways between wildlife habitat ranges. This loss of habitat connectivity for iconic wildlife including desert bighorn sheep as well as desert tortoises, mountain lions, badgers and kit foxes will further fragment and isolate their populations.  Adequate wildlife crossings will 1) reduce this habitat fragmentation and consequent inbreeding issues through movement corridors, and 2) increase highway safety by reducing potentially fatal collisions between vehicles and animals trapped on the I-15.

Caltrans has jurisdiction over the project’s right-of-way, along with existing authorities, that can ensure the building of these wildlife overpasses by being made part of the project’s construction requirements. With the inclusion of these overcrossings, the project will be consistent with the State of California’s biodiversity protection efforts while also providing reductions in greenhouse gasses.

Brightline is seeking to raise hundreds of millions of dollars in tax-exempt bonds through the State of California for this more than $8 billion project. A project that Brightline estimates may earn an expected $1 billion in annual operating profit. The construction costs of three wildlife overpasses would represent a tiny fraction of those profits — yet bring lasting, lifesaving benefits to both desert wildlife and human travelers.

By requiring the Brightline project include wildlife overcrossings in its construction plans, California can protect our world-class biodiversity while championing greenhouse gas-reducing high-speed rail.

YOUR NAME

Member

California Chapter of the Wild Sheep Foundation