



April 16, 2021
Teton County Board of County Commissioners

RE: Please plan ahead to preserve the efficacy of new wildlife crossings at Stilson

Dear Chair Macker and Commissioners,

Congratulations to the County and partners for the recent BUILD grant award. This grant has renewed conversations about the future of Jackson Hole Mountain Resort and County land at Stilson. We support Stilson serving a role in solving our community's transportation challenges, **and** we want to highlight Stilson's importance to wildlife permeability. Given the \$3M public investment in building the top-priority wildlife crossings at this location, we urge you to invest in a collaborative planning process for Stilson – focused on transportation and wildlife protection – before you make any specific changes to existing conservation easements or additional amenities at this location.

Plan first, then develop

Stilson is a priority location for wildlife, transit, and perhaps other community amenities. Since the County last adopted a formal plan in the '90s, the community context has changed significantly. We now know about the pending reconstruction of the Snake River Bridge and intersection, increased recreation at Rendezvous Park, county acquisition of BLM lands at Emily Stevens Park and Stilson boat ramp, voter approval of \$10M in public funding for wildlife crossings, and new opportunities for housing and recreation in Northern South Park. New or intensified uses should be evaluated given this context, with specific attention given to preserving the efficacy of the county's highest priority wildlife crossing. A collaborative planning effort for both the public and private land, with thoughtful community engagement, is the best way to identify needed changes for Stilson that still protect wildlife.

Premature changes may inadvertently lock in a worse design for wildlife

Although JHMR's easement amendment seems relatively minor, it comes without certainty in potential future development at this site. For example, if the county and JHMR decide to add new and more impactful uses, those uses might be best located as far as possible from the wildlife crossings. Without thoughtful planning with wildlife experts, approved plans could preemptively remove opportunities to mitigate impacts to wildlife.

This area will look and function vastly different in the future for wildlife and humans with the addition of wildlife crossings, right-of-way funnel fencing, and improvements to the boat launch, in addition to the transit center. We know right now that the area is critical to moose and seasonal elk movements and, as part of the Snake River Corridor, is important habitat for a host of species. Each of these improvements are funded and approved by voters, the state of Wyoming, or the federal government. Siting of the improvements proposed at Stilson is critical to the overall function of the area for wildlife and meeting the expectations set forth in our Comprehensive Plan. We are concerned that without thoughtful planning, these actions risk creating another new "node" in our community, beyond the goals of a transit facility.

Please do not amend any easements yet, and instead invest in a thoughtful planning process first. We think easements play a critical role in preserving this area and thank JHMR for their willingness to use these tools. We are anxious to see a collaborative planning process start, which includes these tools, and considers the entirety of future development at this site. We believe Stilson can meet more community needs through a design process that evaluates the effect of new or intensified uses on wildlife along with other community values and goals.

Sincerely,



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