



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

A DOZEN MAYORS SUPPORT THE HIGHWAY 10 - ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY PLAN

Eastman, QC (September 12, 2022) - Appalachian Corridor highlights the exemplary collaboration of the municipalities regarding the proposal of the *Highway 10 - Ecological Connectivity Plan*, which targets the optimal wildlife developments to be planned to restore ecological connectivity on both sides of the A10, between kilometer markers 74 and 121. The mayors of the municipalities of Bromont, Eastman, West Bolton, Stukely-Sud, Saint-Étienne-de-Bolton, Orford, Magog, Farnham, Canton de Shefford, Lac-Brome, North Hatley and Austin, among others, accompanied the conservation organization for the unveiling of the Highway 10 - Ecological Connectivity Plan, during its press conference today at Maison Merry, in Magog.

BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUE

Ecological connectivity is recognized for its importance, not only as an ally in the context of climate change, but also for the maintenance of biodiversity. Wildlife needs to move through its habitat to drink, eat and reproduce. When a road is built in the middle of a habitat, wildlife must cross it. The road then becomes an obstacle to ecological connectivity and in the case of Highway 10, it is the major obstacle in the area, as evidenced by the large number of vehicle-wildlife collisions each year. In fact, according to data from the Ministère des Transports du Québec (MTQ - 2015), each year, on the section alone between kilometers 68 and 143, there is an average of 90 deer collisions, 8 moose collisions, 2 bear collisions and several hundred with other wildlife. To increase safety for road users and wildlife, as well as to improve connectivity, the solution is to build suitable crossing structures, such as bridges, tunnels, etc., and guide wildlife through them with fencing.

AN IMPORTANT STRATEGIC LOCATION

The *Highway 10 Ecological Connectivity Plan* is of major strategic importance because of its location. It lies directly within the Northern Appalachians and Acadia, an area that provides a critical connection between the temperate forests of the eastern United States and the cooler boreal forests of Canada. The Quebec portion of this ecoregion (also known as the Northern Green Mountains) is located precisely within the Appalachian Corridor action area. It is one of the most critical links for ecological connectivity in eastern North America, and Highway 10 is the biggest obstacle.

A SCIENTIFIC AND RIGOROUS APPROACH

The *Highway 10 – Ecological Connectivity Plan* is the result of an extensive analysis and consultation process conducted by Appalachian Corridor and its partners since 2010. It allowed us to target seven priority areas based on four criteria: the occurrence of road mortality, land use, proximity to an ecological corridor or a core habitat and proximity to a watercourse. Of these seven areas, two are located in the Bromont-Shefford sector, three in the West Bolton- Stukely-Sud sector, one in the Eastman sector and one in the Austin-Magog sector.

The process also made it possible to identify the most relevant types of development for each sector. Thus, the Plan first provides for the optimization of existing structures, for example by adding shelves to existing culverts, by building oversized culverts, by developing the banks of waterways or by modifying existing road structures. It also includes the development of crossings adapted to different wildlife: underpasses, under the



road, for small and medium-sized wildlife; overpasses - combining wildlife walkways and ecological bridges - for large wildlife (bobcat, white-tailed deer, moose, coyote, black bear, etc.).

"We are thrilled with this next step toward the realization of this great and innovative project in our region," said Lisette Maillé, mayor of Austin and representative of the mayors who support the project. *"In Austin, we have been working together on this project for nearly a decade, including the adoption of regulatory measures that reduce barriers to the free movement of wildlife."*

BENEFITS FOR WILDLIFE AND PEOPLE

The mayors support the plan because they see many benefits for their citizens.

Highway users would benefit from improved road safety as appropriate facilities would significantly reduce the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions and the annual costs associated with them. In addition, it would prevent serious injuries, lost time, stress to users and even loss of life.

The project would promote movement and the maintenance of biodiversity.

"In a context of climate change, the adaptation of species to temperature increases depends on the ecological connectivity between natural environments, allowing them to move from south to north. However, roads act as a barrier for many species, preventing the use of these ecological corridors," explains Clément Robidoux, director of conservation at Appalachian Corridor. *"The fragmentation of ecosystems by the road network is a serious threat to the maintenance of biodiversity."*

Finally, since ecological connectivity is clearly identified as a climate change adaptation strategy, the Highway 10 - Ecological Connectivity Plan would be an obvious response for both the immediate region and the Northern Appalachian/Acadian ecoregion.

AN AMBITIOUS AND WELL-RECEIVED VISION

"The response from the stakeholders to whom we have presented the Plan is more than positive! The project responds to a well-known problem, not only among citizens, but also among decision-makers who want to change things. It is also a way to secure all the investments that have been made in conservation in the region and to contribute to the long-term maintenance of the ecosystems of Parc national du Mont-Orford," says Mélanie Lelièvre, executive Director of Appalachian Corridor. *"In the current context of knowledge in road ecology, climate change and new objectives for the preservation of biodiversity, on the eve of a new government mandate, it seems important to us to make the Plan a priority."*

The overall project is expected to cost between \$110 and \$141 million. The investments could be spread over the cycle of planned infrastructure upgrades on this section of Highway 10. The successful implementation of the Plan relies on the leadership commitment of the Ministère des Transports du Québec in partnership with the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs du Québec, the Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, the RCMs, local municipalities, conservation organizations and other local partners.



A REGIONAL PLAN THAT IS PART OF A PROVINCIAL INITIATIVE

The *Highway 10 - Ecological Connectivity Plan* is part of the Quebec Ecological Corridors Initiative coordinated by Nature Conservancy of Canada and its many partners. This project is financially supported by the Government of Quebec through the Action-Climat Quebec program and is consistent with the objectives of the Plan for a Green Economy 2030.

Although the Ecological Connectivity Plan - Highway 10 is specifically developed for the reality of Highway 10 in the Eastern Townships, similar initiatives are underway in other regions of Quebec, notably through the collaboration of the Quebec Ecological Corridors Initiative.

Appalachian Corridor would also like to thank the Fondation de la Faune du Québec for its involvement, as well as Environment and Climate Change Canada through the Community Designated Priority Sites for Species at Risk initiative of the Canada Nature Fund.

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Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada

Environment and
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Québec 





ABOUT

The Initiative québécoise Corridors écologiques (IQCÉ) is made up of 10 organizations from 11 regions of Quebec that promote a collective approach to land use planning to increase the conservation of natural environments connected by ecological corridors.

Established and coordinated by the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the initiative aims to support governments and engage in action Regional County Municipalities (RCMs), municipalities and citizens who own woodlots, farmers, actors of a network of local partners, all playing a strategic role in land use essential to achieving the objectives.

The **Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC)** is the country's unifying force for nature. NCC seeks solutions to the twin crises of rapid biodiversity loss and climate change through large-scale, permanent land conservation. As a trusted partner, NCC works with people, communities, businesses and government to protect and care for our most important natural areas. Since 1962, NCC has brought Canadians together to conserve and restore more than 15 million hectares, including nearly 50,000 hectares in Quebec. NCC is a registered charity. With nature, NCC builds a thriving world. To learn more, visit natureconservancy.ca

Nature Trust of Canada's Community Designated Priority Sites for Species at Risk

The Community Designated Priority Sites for Species at Risk program is a funding initiative (2019-2026) managed by Environment and Climate Change Canada. It supports multi-partner initiatives in priority sites where there are opportunities to protect and recover species at risk and their habitats through multi-species and ecosystem-based conservation actions. <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change.html>

The mission of the **Fondation de la faune du Québec** is to promote the conservation and enhancement of wildlife and its habitats. Thanks to the contributions of more than one million Quebec hunters, fishers and trappers, thousands of donors and numerous private companies, the Foundation has been supporting more than 2,000 organizations throughout Quebec since 1987, creating a true wildlife movement.

Appalachian Corridor is a non-profit conservation organization celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2022. Its mission is to protect the natural environments of the Appalachian region of southern Quebec. Through the implementation of its conservation strategy, Appalachian Corridor provides local communities with the means to maintain and restore a living environment that respects the ecology of the region, from a sustainable development perspective. A total of 17 local organizations are affiliate members of Appalachian Corridor and together they contribute to accelerating and increasing the conservation projects carried out on the territory. Since the beginning of its activities, the extent of the areas protected by Appalachian Corridor and its partners totals more than 16,200 hectares of land protected forever – equivalent to more than the surface area of the city of Granby.

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HIGHWAY 10 - ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY PLAN

September 12, 2022

STATEMENT FROM THE MAYORS ATTENDING THE PRESS BRIEFING

PROJECT: Support for the vision promoted by the Ecological Connectivity Plan - Highway 10 developed by Appalachian Corridor for a "Restoration of ecological connectivity on both sides of Highway 10, between kilometers 74 and 121"

We support the proposal developed by Appalachian Corridor for the following reasons:

THE URGENCY OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTIVITY

Climate change is a serious threat to human health and well-being.

Ecological connectivity is recognized as a fundamental strategy for increasing the resilience of natural environments, our species, and our societies to climate change. These interconnected environments play a crucial role in terms of ecological services provided to society. They ensure water and air quality, etc. Wildlife connectivity (e.g. wildlife crossing) is one of the essential components of ecological connectivity.

THE KEY ROLE OF MUNICIPALITIES IN ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND CONNECTIVITY

Municipalities are at the forefront of putting forward solutions to adapt to climate change. Mr. Demers, Reeve of the Memphremagog RCM and President of the Fédération québécoise des municipalités (FQM) reminded us in an article at the end of August that: "The urgency to act is no longer in question, and elected officials are resolutely committed to protecting the environment. The leadership undertaken in the protection of natural environments (...) engages all the actors of our communities.

The Union of Municipalities of Quebec also reminds us in the spring of 2022 of the importance of "protecting wetlands, natural environments, ecological corridors and forest cover".

The municipal authorities are therefore at the forefront and concerned in the fight against climate change.

BECAUSE HIGHWAY 10 ACTS AS A BARRIER ON THE TERRITORY AND ROAD ECOLOGY IS A POWERFUL SOLUTION

Every year, several hundred collisions with wildlife occur on the portion of the highway under study.

Road ecology is recognized as an essential solution to restore ecological connectivity and reduce the impacts of road infrastructures on wildlife, as was the case for the developments on Route 175 or more recently on Route 410 in Sherbrooke. Road ecology has been proven to meet these challenges, in addition to considerably reducing collisions between wildlife and motorists (increased road safety).

The 82 km of wildlife crossings installed in Banff Park have proven their worth, and monitoring since 1996 shows that these facilities have reduced wildlife collisions by at least 80%.

In France, on 9,200 kilometers of roads managed by highway companies, there are more than 1,800 wildlife crossings.²



A SERIOUS APPROACH, BASED ON SCIENCE

For nearly 10 years, numerous studies have been conducted between kilometers 68 and 143 of Highway 10 to document the situation. The Highway 10 Ecological Connectivity Plan was developed based on the results of these studies, supported by the most recent literature on road ecology.

These studies were conducted by Appalachian Corridor, the Ministère des Transports (MTQ), the Ministère de la Faune, des Forêts et des Parcs (MFFP), the Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les Changements Climatiques (MELCC), the Université de Sherbrooke and Concordia University.

Examples:

- Protocol for the identification and protection of wildlife corridors and crossings;
- Delineation of ecological corridors;
- Analysis of existing infrastructure and identification of four priority sectors;
- Validation of wildlife movements on both sides of the highway;
- Identification of the sections where wildlife mortality is highest.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GREEN MOUNTAINS NATURAL AREA

The four priority sectors of Highway 10, between Granby and Magog, are located within the Quebec portion of the Green Mountains. This natural area is one of the most beautiful and ecologically valuable regions in Quebec. It is a recognized critical ecological corridor within the Northern Appalachian/Acadian ecoregion;

The Northern Appalachian/Acadian ecoregion is recognized as globally significant by many jurisdictions. In fact, the Conference of New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers recognized in a resolution that efforts to conserve and restore ecological connectivity are needed and that transportation and natural resource agencies must work together to ensure that transportation infrastructure allows species to move and to facilitate adaptation to climate change. (rf resolution 40-3);

TO ENSURE INVESTMENTS IN PROTECTION IN THE REGION AND THE MAINTENANCE OF BIODIVERSITY IN MONT ORFORD NATIONAL PARK

More than \$140 million has been invested in conservation over the past 20 years to protect natural environments on private land (16,250 ha) to create a vast corridor of natural areas in the region. These investments are unprecedented in Quebec. Our region has the largest number of conservation projects on private land in Quebec.

Moreover, to maintain its biodiversity, Parc national du Mont Orford must unquestionably remain linked to the large peripheral massifs. Maintaining the natural environments of its peripheral zone and restoring connectivity, particularly at the level of Highway 10 through the construction of wildlife crossings, is therefore a definite benefit for the health of the Park's ecosystems.

For all these reasons, the mayors present at the press briefing support the implementation of this vision, which responds to several issues, and are asking the political parties to state their intention to make this proposal a priority for the region.

The Highway 10 - Ecological Connectivity Plan is a concrete solution that meets the needs of all stakeholders.