

Dear Senators,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Dr. Karen Ekernas, and I am an M.D. Emergency Physician trained at Denver Health and hold a Master's in Public Health from SUNY Downstate. I have been practicing in Denver since 2008. I am not speaking on behalf of any organization, but instead aim to provide a representative view of what front line health care providers see after the results of auto-versus-pedestrian crashes and wildlife-vehicle-collisions.

We have an axiom in emergency medicine that there is no such thing as a low acuity auto-versus-pedestrian accident. Even at low speeds, vehicles simply have enormous momentum. A 5,000 pound vehicle traveling at 10 mph impacts a person with the same momentum as would a 100 pound person falling off a multistory building and hitting the ground at 500 mph. As you can probably understand, a collision with that momentum can easily cause severe injury and loss of life. Auto-versus-pedestrian accidents are all too common occurrences in emergency rooms across our state.

Somewhat less common but often even more devastating are wildlife-vehicle-collisions, which represent some of the worst cases I have seen in my career. I remember one case several years ago when a family had hit a moose and was airlifted by Flight For Life. The radio transmission was broken up, but what we understood was that there was a pregnant mother whose baby may need to be delivered on arrival. We mobilized our trauma team, OBGYNs, pediatricians, neonatal intensivists, and our ER staff in the trauma bay to meet the helicopter. That team included almost 20 doctors ready to assist. When the helicopter arrived, we found that we had misunderstood the transmission and in fact neither the mother nor the baby could be saved. It's hard to convey the devastation and the feeling in the room when you have so many people ready to help, and realizing there is nothing you can do for the patients or the family.

These tragedies, which – though heartbreaking for health care providers – are life changing for the victims' families, who are your constituents. Preventing even one of those tragedies would be worthwhile, and this bill would prevent many. I encourage you to pass it.

Thank you for your time.

Karen Ekernas, M.D., M.P.H.



April 24, 2025

Chair Cathy Kipp
Vice Chair Janice Marchman
200 E. Colfax Ave.
Denver, Colorado, 80203

Dear Chair Kipp, Vice Chair Marchman, and Members of the Colorado Senate Finance Committee,

On behalf of The Pew Charitable Trusts, I write to express our support for HB25 1303. This crucial measure aims to reduce our state's high rate of vehicle collisions with wildlife, pedestrians, and cyclists. We endorse the creation of the proposed Crash Prevention Enterprise to provide dedicated funding for transportation infrastructure improvements that will help prevent life-altering collisions and save lives and money.

Pew's U.S. Conservation program aims to conserve ecologically significant lands and waters by collaborating with local communities, businesses, government officials, and other stakeholders to achieve balanced, commonsense conservation outcomes. An important facet of our U.S. Conservation portfolio is conserving and maintaining wildlife migration corridors. Based on our work in this arena and our engagement with stakeholders across the nation, we recognize and appreciate the sponsors of HB25 1303 for crafting legislation that would enhance wildlife connectivity and save lives.

Vehicle collisions in Colorado cost lives, damage property, and burden families financially. Between 2014 and 2024, pedestrian fatalities increased by 73 percent, and 1,131 cyclists and pedestrians lost their lives on Colorado's roads. In 2023 alone, 156 cyclists and pedestrians lost their lives – a record high in Colorado. The estimated annual cost of wildlife-vehicle collisions in the state is \$313 million, with the average cost of hitting a deer exceeding \$23,500. These incidents also contribute to the loss of valuable wildlife populations, hurting the health of our state's herds, the quality of our hunting seasons, and our \$62.5 billion outdoor recreation economy.

Experts agree that making infrastructure improvements to prioritize safety is one of the most effective ways to reduce traffic fatalities. The Federal Highway Administration cites infrastructure, such as raised medians and pedestrian refuge areas, as an effective strategy to mitigate or prevent crashes with vulnerable road users. Similarly, wildlife crossing structures—such as overpasses or underpasses designed to safely guide wildlife across roads—are an extremely effective solution to the problem of crashes with animals. For example, a series of wildlife crossings on State Highway 9 reduced crashes with wildlife by 92 percent.



In addition to saving lives, these projects will reduce insurance claims and minimize costly road closures. According to the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), every hour the I-70 mountain corridor is closed for emergency purposes, the costs to the surrounding communities are up to \$2 million in lost economic activity.

Given the myriad economic, safety, and conservation benefits of this bill, we urge the Committee to advance HB25 1303. Thank you for your consideration of Pew's views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Lane".

Patrick Lane
Senior Manager
The Pew Charitable Trusts

cc: Senator Scott Bright
cc: Senator Lisa Frizell
cc: Senator Julie Gonzales
cc: Senator Chris Kolker
cc: Senator Kyle Mullica
cc: Senator Cleave Simpson
cc: Senator Marc Snyder



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Senate Finance

04/24/2025 Upon Adjournment

HB25-1303 Funding for Motor Vehicle Collision Prevention

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Mark Kaiser Against themselves	<p>No on HB25-1303</p> <p>FIRST, this is just another version of HB25-1044. I am also against that this would setup as an enterprise fund which eliminates it from TABOR controls.</p> <p>Opinion on Fee-Based Funding for Local Vulnerable Road User Protection Strategies</p> <p>In recent discussions regarding the authorization for local governments to generate additional fee-based funding for local vulnerable road user protection strategies, several concerns have been raised, prompting a closer examination of its potential impacts.</p> <p>One primary argument against such authorization is the observation that individuals who would benefit from enhanced protection often disregard existing safeguards. This raises a critical point: the effectiveness of any new measures hinges on compliance and adherence. If vulnerable road users continue to ignore current safety measures, additional protections may not significantly improve vehicle and pedestrian safety. Consequently, the efficacy of allocating resources towards new strategies remains questionable.</p> <p>Moreover, the financial implications of this authorization cannot be overlooked. With property taxes already on the rise, the introduction of another tax or fee burden could exacerbate the financial strain on citizens. It is essential for policymakers to consider the economic context and the cumulative impact of multiple financial obligations on residents. The imposition of additional fees might be perceived as an undue burden, particularly for those already struggling with escalating living costs.</p> <p>Furthermore, the effectiveness of fee-based funding strategies in achieving the desired outcomes warrants scrutiny. If the additional revenue generated does not translate into tangible improvements in road safety, the rationale behind such measures could be undermined. It is imperative that any proposed solution not only addresses the root causes of road user vulnerability but also demonstrates a clear, positive impact on overall safety.</p> <p>In conclusion, while the intention behind authorizing local governments to generate fee-based funding for vulnerable road user protection is commendable, it is crucial to evaluate the practical implications thoroughly. The potential for non-compliance, the financial burden on citizens, and the actual effectiveness of the strategies must be carefully weighed. Policymakers should seek a balanced approach that ensures both the protection of vulnerable road users and the economic well-being of the community.</p>

<p>Mark Kaiser</p> <p>Against themselves</p>	<p>No on HB25-1303</p> <p>FIRST, this is just another version of HB25-1044. I am also against that this would setup as an enterprise fund which eliminates it from TABOR controls.</p> <p>Opinion on Fee-Based Funding for Local Vulnerable Road User Protection Strategies</p> <p>In recent discussions regarding the authorization for local governments to generate additional fee-based funding for local vulnerable road user protection strategies, several concerns have been raised, prompting a closer examination of its potential impacts.</p> <p>One primary argument against such authorization is the observation that individuals who would benefit from enhanced protection often disregard existing safeguards. This raises a critical point: the effectiveness of any new measures hinges on compliance and adherence. If vulnerable road users continue to ignore current safety measures, additional protections may not significantly improve vehicle and pedestrian safety. Consequently, the efficacy of allocating resources towards new strategies remains questionable.</p> <p>Moreover, the financial implications of this authorization cannot be overlooked. With property taxes already on the rise, the introduction of another tax or fee burden could exacerbate the financial strain on citizens. It is essential for policymakers to consider the economic context and the cumulative impact of multiple financial obligations on residents. The imposition of additional fees might be perceived as an undue burden, particularly for those already struggling with escalating living costs.</p> <p>Furthermore, the effectiveness of fee-based funding strategies in achieving the desired outcomes warrants scrutiny. If the additional revenue generated does not translate into tangible improvements in road safety, the rationale behind such measures could be undermined. It is imperative that any proposed solution not only addresses the root causes of road user vulnerability but also demonstrates a clear, positive impact on overall safety.</p> <p>In conclusion, while the intention behind authorizing local governments to generate fee-based funding for vulnerable road user protection is commendable, it is crucial to evaluate the practical implications thoroughly. The potential for non-compliance, the financial burden on citizens, and the actual effectiveness of the strategies must be carefully weighed. Policymakers should seek a balanced approach that ensures both the protection of vulnerable road users and the economic well-being of the community.</p>
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