

# \$1.6 mil. tunnel being built for wildlife in El Dorado County

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

On a wooded and wildlife-rich stretch of Highway 50 in the foothills, Caltrans is about to launch an unusual road safety experiment – for critters and drivers alike.

The agency is building the Sacramento region's first deer and large-animal road crossing, a \$1.6 million tunnel and fence project, in hopes of reducing the amount of roadkill in the Highway 50 corridor.

Even as they put finishing touches on the tunnel east of Shingle Springs near the El Dorado Road exit, state Department of Transportation biologists acknowledge they can't be sure how well it will work.

Will deer, coyotes, foxes, bobcats and mountain lions find their way to the 12-foot-by-12-foot concrete culvert? And will they choose to use it, or continue along the fence looking for an opening to make a dangerous dash across the four lanes above?

"No one location is going to solve the problem," said Suzanne Melim, Caltrans biologist on the project. "I think it'll work well.

"I look at this as a starting point in what will be a continual effort."

The Highway 50 undercrossing is funded by a federal grant. But state officials acknowledge that spending money on an animal crossing when California faces a massive deficit could raise questions.

**Read the whole story**