

Study shows billboards associated with increase in crashes

WASHINGTON, May 8, 2014 – A study on one of Israel’s busiest highways found that the removal of roadside billboards significantly reduced the number of crashes along the roadway, including a more than two-thirds reduction in fatal or injury crashes.

The analysis on the Ayalon Highway in Tel Aviv compared the number and types of crashes at treatment sections, where billboards were present along the roadway, with crashes within a control group of road sections where billboards had been removed or covered.

In 2007, before the billboards were removed or covered, there were a total of 95 crashes within the treatment sections. In 2008, after the billboards were removed or covered, there were 65 crashes, a decrease of more than one-third. The decrease in injury or fatal crashes was even more compelling: from 55 in the ‘before’ period of 2007 down to 17 in the ‘after’ period of 2008, a more than two-thirds reduction.

The study’s authors said: “The downward trend in accidents in the ‘after’ period was robust and consistent...particularly for injury crashes. Therefore we can conclude that...there is empirical evidence of a link between the removal of advertising signs and the improvement of road safety on an urban / suburban highway.”

“This study provides long awaited documentation that there is a direct connection between billboard distraction and crashes, providing strong evidence that billboards are a hazard to traffic safety,” said Mary Tracy, president of Scenic America. “Combined with similar and mounting evidence from around the world, it is time for public officials in the U.S. to prioritize traffic safety and protect the travelling public by taking action to limit these unnecessary roadside distractions.”

The opportunity to perform the study presented itself because of a governmental order to temporarily remove or cover the billboards. This allowed the researchers, working on behalf of Israel’s National Road Safety Authority, to look at crashes in the vicinity of these billboards both before and after they were removed or covered.

While the full study is in Hebrew, the study’s Abstract has been translated into English by its authors and can be found here, along with the full study and a presentation on the study given at the 5th International Conference on Traffic and Transport Psychology:

<http://www.scenic.org/resources/studies-and-reports/israel-billboard-safety-study>

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Scenic America is the only national nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing the visual character of America’s roadways, countryside and communities.