

“The great thing about outdoor advertising is that you can’t turn the page, you can’t switch it off—it’s just there.”—JEREMY MALE, CEO, CBS OUTDOOR AMERICAS

Billboard Fact Sheet

“I cannot believe that the free-enterprise system would be irreparably damaged if [billboards] were abolished. Who is in favor of them? Only the people who make money out of them.”

—DAVID OGILVY, IN
OGILVY ON ADVERTISING

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How Many Billboards Are There?

Scenic America estimates there are between 560,000–780,000 billboards on federal aid roads as of December 2013. This is based on a Congressional Research Service estimate in 1991 that there were 450,000 permitted billboards along federal aid roads and that the number was growing by 5,000–15,000 annually. Combined with those on local and state roads there are likely over 2 million billboards in the United States today.

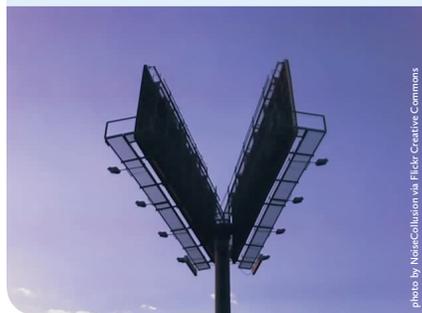
The Highway Beautification Act (HBA)

Passed by Congress and signed by President Johnson in 1965, the HBA:

- Requires states to maintain effective control of outdoor advertising along federal highways
- Regulates billboards within 660 ft of federal aid roads
- Prohibits billboards in areas with non-commercial activity
- Prohibits new billboards that don’t conform to certain size, spacing and lighting requirements
- Requires a 10% reduction in federal highway funding to states in violation of the law

Billboard Prohibitions

Four states prohibit all billboards: Maine, Vermont, Alaska and Hawaii. Larger cities with prohibitions on new billboards include Houston, Los Angeles, St. Paul and Kansas City. Scenic America estimates thousands of communities around the country prohibit construction of new billboards.



*Scenic*America

Billboard Industry Revenue

\$6.7 billion in 2012, according to the Outdoor Advertising Association of America.

Billboards as a Percentage of All Advertising

In 2012 billboards accounted for approximately 2.5% of total advertising spending in the U.S., according to figures from Marketing Charts and the Outdoor Advertising Association of America.

May My City Prohibit New Billboards?

Most likely, yes. Decades of case law has affirmed the rights of communities to prohibit construction of billboards based on safety and aesthetic concerns.

“Where do I think billboards should be allowed? Well, wherever a community feels that adding visual pollution would be to their benefit.”

—PROFESSOR CHARLES F. FLOYD

Property Values

A recent study in Philadelphia showed that homes within 500 ft of a billboard are worth \$31,000 less at time of sale than those further away. In addition, every billboard in a census tract correlated with a nearly \$1,000 depreciation in home value compared to the city average.

Tree Cutting

About half the states allow billboard companies to cut and remove trees on public property to preserve clear views of their advertising. In many instances the states require only a fraction of the trees' value as compensation for their removal.



4 states and thousands of communities prohibit construction of billboards.

Taxpayers' Burden

Billboard owners pay little to no property taxes and no road user fees such as fuel taxes and tolls, yet they derive 100% of their value from their proximity to publicly-funded roads.

When the government needs the land under a billboard for a public purpose such as a road improvement project, billboard owners often demand compensation for lost future revenues, often for up to seven years or more into the future. For example, the replacement of the Lafayette Bridge in St. Paul, Minnesota required the removal of one digital billboard and four static billboards owned by Clear Channel Outdoor. In September 2013 the Minnesota Department of Transportation settled with Clear Channel, paying them \$4.3 million for the digital billboard and \$3 million for the static billboards, all from public funds. To learn more go to: www.scenic.org/taxpayer.

No Amortization on Federal Highways

Congress passed an amendment to the HBA in 1978 to revoke the rights of cities and states to amortize billboards along federal highways, therefore governmental agencies must pay cash compensation to remove even nonconforming billboards.

Are Billboards Effective Advertising?

In a 2012 study by the research firm Marketing Charts, only 0.2% of adults said outdoor advertising was the most influential ad medium in their purchase decisions.

A 2006 survey by the National Federation of Independent Businesses showed that billboards are the least important method of advertising among its members.

“This is a rare issue where Democrats, Republicans and Independents are all in agreement. They don’t like billboards and they think their local governments should be able to make the rules controlling them.”

—TOM JENSEN, DIRECTOR, PUBLIC POLICY POLLING



Who Uses Billboards?

According to Outdoor Advertising Association of America, in 2012 the top users of outdoor advertising included:

- McDonald's
- Coca-Cola
- Verizon
- Metro PCS
- AT&T
- Cracker Barrel
- Comcast
- Samsung
- Coors

Public Opinion

A 2011 poll of North Carolina voters by Public Policy Polling found that 70% of registered Democrats, 68% of registered Republicans and 78% of registered Independent voters said billboards detracted from community appearance. In the same poll 80% of respondents opposed removing trees to clear views of billboards.

In 2011 the M.J. Ross Group polled voters in Reno, Nevada and found that 80% said the city already had enough or too many billboards.

A 2007 poll of Texas voters by Baseline & Associates found that 86% thought there were too many or enough billboards already in the state.

A 2011 poll by the *Portland Press Herald* showed that 94% of Mainers opposed a plan to allow billboards back into the state. The proposal was quickly scuttled.



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For additional information about this and other issues, visit www.scenic.org.

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Digital Billboard Facts

Legality

Scenic America believes digital billboards on federal aid roads violate the letter and spirit of the Highway Beautification Act, and has filed a lawsuit challenging a 2007 Federal Highway Administration ruling that deemed them permissible. For more information visit www.scenic.org/lawsuit.

Digital Billboard Prohibitions

In addition to Maine, Vermont, Alaska, Hawaii (which prohibit all billboards), the state of Montana and a growing number of cities prohibit them, including Houston, Denver, St. Louis and Kansas City. Grassroots citizen groups have worked to pass ballot initiatives prohibiting them in cities including San Francisco and Rapid City.

Traffic Safety

A growing body of evidence demonstrates that digital billboards pose a threat to traffic safety. A study by the Swedish government found that digital billboards took drivers' eyes off the road for significant periods of time and they subsequently ordered the removal of digital signs. Other studies from Denmark, Canada and Australia show similar concerns about digital billboards' impact on traffic safety. For more information visit www.scenic.org/safety.

Energy Usage

A 2010 study by urban planner Gregory Young found that in a 24-hour period a digital billboard uses the same amount of energy as 15 average U.S. homes. For more information visit www.scenic.org/energy.

Light Pollution and the Night Sky

Digital billboards project light outwards and can illuminate the area near them for quite some distance. People who live near digital billboards complain that they light up their living rooms and bedrooms with constantly changing colored lights. Dark skies groups and astronomers complain that they flood the night sky with ambient light. Light pollution from digital signs can affect nocturnal animals such as birds and bats, said Charles Lee, director of advocacy for Audubon Florida.

A 2005 study by the Behavior Research Center found that 73% of Arizonans were opposed to allowing digital billboards on state highways.



In a 24-hour period a digital billboard uses the same amount of energy as 15 average U.S. homes

"If you want your ad to 'stick out like a sore thumb,' nothing is bigger, brighter or more bold than digital outdoor."

—SHIPP OUTDOOR