



August 3, 2011

Re: Digital Signs and Billboards in St. Petersburg.

The Suncoast Group of the Sierra Club opposes the proposed installation of digital signs and billboards for the following reasons:

- *Esthetically, electronic billboards are a blight on the city.*

In St. Petersburg, these types of signs and billboards are out of scale and character with existing neighborhoods, creating a Las Vegas appearance where we have carefully crafted a historic and individual local appeal. Comparable to giant warehouse sized LED TV sets, their images are large, bright, and rapidly changing. Even in daylight, drivers could see them over a mile* away. The effect on drivers, as well as nearby homes, restaurants and offices would be one of distraction and disturbance.

- *Road safety is a deep concern.*

The bright, continuously changing images are so distracting that they are literally inescapable for drivers. On highways at 65 mph, approaching drivers would be able to see the largest signs for some 180 seconds.* Much longer in urban settings. Visual interference from these flickering images contributes to dangerous distracting road conditions for drivers, pedestrians and bicycle riders, at a time when we are working to improve the safety of our roadways for all users.

We acknowledge that digital signs and electronic billboards will enable operators to sell advertising by the second or minute instead of by the month, greatly increasing their revenues. However, there is little evidence that this increase in revenue will accrue funds to the city. Their deleterious effects on urban landscapes and the major downgrade these signs convey to our city's character must be carefully considered before the city allows them to be installed with no recourse for removal.

For these reasons, we add our voice to the many other citizens and civic groups who oppose them, and believe the City Council should oppose them as well.

Sincerely,

Rudy Scheffer, Chair
Suncoast Group Sierra Club
Pinellas County, Florida

*2007 study for Maryland State Highway Administration by the Veridian Group, Inc.