



AUSTIN DESIGN COMMISSION

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07 April 2008

Re: Amendment to the Sign Ordinance

Mayor Wynn and members of the City Council;

The Design Commission has reviewed the proposed Amendment to the Sign Ordinance and offers these comments in our role of advising Council with respect to Urban Design Issues in the City. In general, the Commission favors well-conceived signage in the public realm that aids in way-finding and does not contribute to visual clutter. Our view is that pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers and users of public transportation should have clear and unobstructed views of the natural and built environment without overhead lines, mechanical equipment or unnecessary signage. The Commission also supports protections offered by the various ordinances that seek to protect the scenic beauty of the Scenic Roadway system in our City and the Hill Country. With these facts in mind, we make the following recommendations:

BILLBOARD RELOCATIONS

- The Design Commission opposes the concept of relocation, opposed the 2004 council decision allowing it, and recommends eliminating the concept entirely.
- The Design Commission opposes the expansion of the roadways to which billboards can be relocated, including any portion of Scenic Roadways.
- The Design Commission opposes the proposed elimination of the 300 Sq. Ft Area of Signs in Commercial Sign Districts, which would allow relocation of signs of up to 672 Sq. Ft. in these districts.
- The Design Commission supports the "greening" of signage by requiring low wattage lamps for illuminating the signs at night.

BILLBOARD LOCATIONS:

The Design Commission would like the proximity restrictions extended to schools, prohibiting the installation of a sign within 800 feet of a boundary of school property.

BAN MOBILE BILLBOARDS:

We support the banning of mobile billboards. While we support and applaud well designed graphics, logos and signage on business vehicles that identify the goods transported by those vehicles, we regard Mobile Billboards as off-premise signage which the City banned in 1983.

FEES FOR TAXICAB SIGNAGE:

While we would prefer not to have advertising on Taxicabs (other than that advertising the cab company), if such signage is to continue to be allowed on taxis, we have no objection to charging a fee for the signage, if the amount of the fee can be enough to actually pay for the cost of implementing and enforcing the program and still have some funds left to help defray the cost of enforcing the sign ordinance as, we believe, was Council's intent.

The Design Commission would like to work with the City to develop a comprehensive Signage and Way-finding program for the entire city that aids our citizens in locating destinations efficiently and safely without having a negative affect on the beauty of our natural and built environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Phil Reed".

Phil Reed, Vice Chair
Austin Design Commission