

METRO'S TRANSPORTATION COMMUNICATION NETWORK (TCN) COUNCIL FILE 22-0392

BACKGROUND: Council President Paul Krekorian is the driving force behind this effort to monetize and commercialize our visual landscape, attempting to rush the Program through as quickly as possible, resulting in an expedited scheduling of the CPC hearing for August 17, 2023.

In December 2021, Krekorian's Budget and Finance Committee approved a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Metro that was buried in an amended supplementary budget report, with no agenda posting or notice to the public. In June 2022, Krekorian removed an important paragraph from a PLUM motion that would have required an analysis of the Program's consistency with the City's Mobility Plan and pending Sign Ordinance.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

- It's really about ads... not improving traffic safety: Neither the City nor the public have been provided information to allow analysis of the purported benefits of a transportation communication network that is supposed to improve traffic safety. No evaluation mechanisms or measures for success have been defined. AllVision, the Program's contractor, is an advertising company. **Seven out of every eight images on the digital signs would show advertising.**
- Changing digital advertising is dangerous and distracting: The City has failed to conduct independent analysis or review the many available safety studies or consider the impact of these signs on the City's High Injury Network and Vision Zero. It has also failed to acknowledge the serious consequences of driver distraction on roadway safety, particularly on the most vulnerable roadway users: bicyclists and pedestrians. California's Office of Traffic Safety defines distracted driving as "anything that takes your eyes or mind off the road." Even messages created to promote traffic safety result in distraction and accidents.
- City gets the short end of the stick: The City has yet to be provided with site plans and renderings of the locations of the signs making it impossible for the City and the public to evaluate the benefits and detriments of the Program. The City will not be operating the signs, Metro will be in control. Provide full renderings (to scale) of each location and sign, including dimensions and spacing between other digital signs in the vicinity, prior to consideration of these Ordinances.
- Overrides local community planning documents: Sign types and locations were chosen by Metro without collaboration with the City, overriding the City's existing Specific Plans and other land use overlays adopted after significant community engagement and input. Remove all signs that would violate existing adopted Plans and Overlays.
- Fails to deliver benefits: The Program's removal of a small number (3 to 1 ratio) of old static billboards of limited economic value and impact on the community does not represent meaningful blight reduction when compared to the recommended (10 to 1 ratio) takedown by the City's Planning Commission. Require minimum 10 to 1 takedown ratio.

- Freeway signs impact underserved communities disproportionately: Distribution of signs creates unequal burdens. Signs erected adjacent to freeways are more likely to impact underserved communities. No environmental justice analysis has been provided. Provide environmental justice analysis prior to consideration of these Ordinances.
- NO resource impacts analysis: The City has failed to conduct its own environmental analysis to assess whether the digital ads will have significant impacts on important City resources, such as Bowtie State Park, Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve, Sepulveda Basin Wildlife Reserve, Grand Central Market, Mulholland Scenic Parkway, and others. Remove all signs that would impact the City's biological, historical, cultural, and/or coastal resources.
- May violate public privacy: Digital billboards have been shown to capture personal data from passers-by without permission. There has been no discussion as to the extent of data gathering and protections for the public or data storage security. Include prohibitions on data collection and selling/sharing.
- **Overrides impacts to Coastal Zone:** Metro approved a sign at the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve (along the I-90 Marina Freeway) knowing it would have significant impacts on coastal resources because Metro approved overriding considerations. The City must remove the Ballona Wetlands sign.
- NO cumulative impacts analysis: After implementation of the Program, the downtown area will have a dozen signs within a three-mile radius, all in the vicinity of the recently-established Luskin Children's Orthopedic Hospital sign district.
- Public gets the short end of the stick: The Program does not allow the community the right to appeal any of the freeway-facing signs. **The freeway-facing signs are between 50-90 feet above grade.**
- Sets a negative precedent: The draft Ordinance seeks to allow non-contiguous billboards to be erected under a Supplemental Use District, rather than follow court guidance directing the City to maintain its ban on new billboards by limiting billboards to contiguous areas within Sign Districts. This application of a Supplemental Use District risks opening the door to outdoor advertisers seeking their own billboards outside of Sign Districts, challenging the City's 2002 Sign Ordinance.
- Unclear revenue-sharing: Under the terms of the contract, the City will receive a share of Metro's ad revenues after expenses, yielding significantly less than if this were a City-operated program. The Program competes with and decreases the value of the City's other digital ad initiatives.

