
Transportation Committee

SSB 5298

Brief Description: Authorizing the use of digital outdoor advertising signs to expand the state's emergency messaging capabilities.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators White, Ericksen, Carrell, Shin, Ranker, Hill and Conway).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Permits digital outdoor advertising signs visible from the state highway system within incorporated cities and towns under certain circumstances.
- Requires owners of digital outdoor advertising signs to coordinate with law enforcement and emergency management authorities to display emergency information.
- Allows state agencies to contract with owners and vendors of digital outdoor advertising signs to expand the state's missing person and emergency messaging system. Such contracts must be voluntary and may not include compensation.
- Requires the Washington State Department of Transportation to adopt rules establishing standards for brightness, size, and change of copy for digital outdoor advertising signs.

Hearing Date: 3/15/11

Staff: Christie Parker (786-7322).

Background:

The Scenic Vistas Act regulates signs and billboards along state highways. Permits are required for signs that advertise commercial activity that is not on the premises on which the sign is located; these are referred to as "off-premise" signs.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Current law prohibits signs which contain flashing, intermittent, or moving light, except those signs that give public service information such as the time, date, temperature, or similar information. In addition, digital signs are permitted so long as they advertise activity on which the sign is located; these are called "on-premise" signs.

Type 4 signs are signs located within 12 air miles of the advertised activity. Type 5 signs display a message of specific interest to the traveling public. Only information about public places; natural phenomena; historic sites; areas of natural scenic beauty or outdoor recreation; and places for lodging, camping, eating, and vehicle service or repair are deemed to be in the interest of the traveling public.

Summary of Bill:

Digital outdoor "off-premise" advertising signs that are located within incorporated cities and towns along state highways are permitted so long as they contain only static messages that avoid flashing lights, variations in light intensity, and the appearance of movement. These signs must advertise activities within 12 air miles of the sign or provide information of interest to the traveling public.

Owners of digital outdoor advertising signs are required to coordinate with law enforcement and emergency management authorities to display emergency information such as amber alerts, missing person alerts, and emergency management information. State agencies may contract with owners and vendors of digital signs to expand the state's missing person network and emergency messaging system. These contracts must be voluntary and may not include compensation.

The Washington State Department of Transportation must adopt rules regarding the allowable brightness, size, and change of copy for digital signs before digital signs may be installed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.