

# Scenic Watch



## "New studies indicate digital billboards compromise driver safety"



Photo: Scenic America

"A review of recent research on driver distraction near digital billboards finds growing evidence that the bright, constantly changing signs negatively impact traffic safety.

The compendium, created by [The Veridian Group](#), highlights new studies showing that digital billboards are attracting longer and more frequent glances from drivers than do static signs, and that driver attention is particularly captured by changes between advertisements, which typically occur every six or eight seconds on a digital billboard.

The compendium's author, engineering psychologist Jerry Wachtel, said that while digital billboards may be succeeding in capturing driver attention, as they are designed to do, for that reason "they represent a growing threat to traffic safety, particularly along our busiest streets and highways."

A 2015 study of eight digital billboard locations on highways in Florida and Alabama showed significantly higher crash rates, 25% in Florida and 29% in Alabama, at sites near the digital billboards than those further away. A disproportionate number were rear-end and sideswipe collisions, both typical of crashes caused by driver distraction.

A new study from M.I.T. suggests that drivers may be unwittingly compelled to look at digital billboards during changes from one advertisement to the next. Due to human nature, "it is likely that drivers find it nearly impossible to avoid a glance to digital billboards during switches between advertisements," said the study's authors

Other recent studies, including an industry-sponsored study in Australia, have found significant problems with drivers drifting out of their lanes in the vicinity of digital billboards.

"These studies are especially alarming given the rate at which digital billboards are going up around the country," said Mary Tracy, president of Scenic America. "It is particularly concerning that our federal government became complicit in these growing threats to public health when they allowed these signs to start going up without first requiring a study to prove they do not endanger driver safety."

In 2007 the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) reversed a long-held position by giving the

February  
2016



## Fun Festivals and Events

### Central and West

**March 1-22**  
Sanibel Music Festival, Sanibel Island

**March 2-May 30**  
Epcot International Flower and Garden Festival, Lake Buena Vista

**March 3-6**  
Music on the Bay, Tampa

**March 3-13**  
Florida Strawberry Festival, Plant City

**March 3-5**  
Sanibel Shell Fair and Show, Sanibel Island

**March 4**  
Jazz Friday at Foosaner Museum of Art, Melbourne

**March 4-6**

green light to digital billboards utilizing "flashing, blinking or intermittent lighting" along federal highways. With no safety analysis, FHWA declared that billboards changing as frequently as 20,000 times a day were not changing "intermittently" as long as they were static for 4 seconds."

-- Press Release, [Scenic America](#)

-- The Veridian Group compendium, "[Compendium of Recent Research Studies on Distraction from Commercial Electronic Variable Message Signs\(CEVMS\)](#)"

-- V. P. Sisiopiku, M. M. Islam, K. Haleem, P. Alluri, and A. Gan, "[Investigation of the Potential Relationship between Crash Occurrence and the Presence of Digital Advertising Billboards in Alabama and Florida](#)", TRB 2015

ADDITIONAL READING

["A field study on the effects of digital billboards on glance behaviour during highway driving"](#), Belyusar, Reimer, Mehler, Coughlin, Accident Analysis and Prevention

## Placemaking in South West Florida:

### ULI growth expert Ed McMahon: SWFL needs 'surprising' spaces



Photo: June Fletcher, Naples Daily News

"Southwest Florida needs to step up its game to attract and keep more residents, a national planning expert told a group of developers Friday.

Ed McMahon, a senior resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C., told 65 ULI members at Florida Gulf Coast University that the region was competing with 3,141 counties and 25,375 towns across the country.

Winning means jettisoning traditional ideas about how to build residential and commercial developments and creating walkable and bikeable places that are 'surprising and distinctive,' he said.

'You can grow by change or you can grow by chance,' said McMahon.

Successful growth, he said, comes from balancing the natural and built environments, and displays what he called 'community character.'

Some cities have accomplished that in unusual ways, he said — for instance, Des Moines created a downtown art park, Philadelphia an outdoor mural arts program, and Paducah, Kentucky, a program to give away blighted homes to artists.

'There needs to be a gateway, a sense of pride and place,' he said. 'The image of a community is fundamentally vital to its well being. What it looks like matters.'

The ability to get to a place by several different transportation modes also is vital, he said, since in many places in America, if you're old and infirm, you're out of luck.'

Plus, people much prefer to hang around places where buildings are human in scale and where they have a variety of things to do, rather than driving to soulless strip malls, McMahon explained.

- Orlando Home & Garden Show, Orlando
- March 5
- First Saturday Jam, Barberville
- March 5
- Plant City Bike Fest, Plant City
- March 5-6
- Arts and Crafts Show, Marco Island
- March 5-6
- Bonita Springs National Art Festival, Bonita Springs
- March 5-6
- Downtown Venice Art Classic, Venice
- March 5-6
- Raymond James Gasparilla Festival of the Arts, Tampa
- March 5-6
- Floral City Strawberry Festival, Floral City
- March 5-6
- The Grant Seafood Festival, Grant
- March 6
- Chocolate Festival, Melbourne
- March 10-13
- All-Florida Championship Rodeo, Arcadia
- March 11-13
- Art Under The Oaks, Vero Beach
- March 11
- Friday Family Fest, Melbourne
- March 11-13
- Tico Warbird Airshow, Titusville
- March 11-20
- Firefighters' Indian River County Fair, Vero Beach
- March 12
- Taste of Oviedo, Oviedo
- March 12-13
- Fort Myers Beach Shrimp Festival and Parade, Fort Myers Beach
- March 12-13
- The Lakeland Craft Festival, Lakeland
- March 12-13
- Manatee Festival of the Arts, Ruskin
- March 17
- Fishermen's Village Annual St Patrick's Day Celebration, Punta Gorda
- March 17
- Downtown Gallery Walk, Punta Gorda
- March 18-20
- Marco Island Seafood & Music Festival, Marco Island
- March 18-20
- Annual Winter Park Sidewalk Art Festival, Winter Park
- March 18-20
- Annual Cuban Sandwich Festival, Ybor City
- March 19
- Cruisin' Downtown DeLand Classic Car Show, DeLand
- March 19
- Southwest Florida Reading Festival, Fort Myers
- March 19-20
- Annual Spring Fine Arts Festival,

'There's a place-making dividend in this,' he said to the developer audience. 'People come back more often and spend more money in places that attract their affection. How many people feel affection for strip malls?'

As well as strip malls, enclosed malls are no longer appealing to young people, who want to have experiences more than they want to buy things, McMahon said. He noted no new enclosed malls have been built anywhere in the country since 2006 and 15 percent of existing malls have closed. Shopping time in enclosed malls also has been declining steadily, he said.

Instead, younger Americans are flocking to outdoor gathering places that resemble, or revive, older American downtowns, like Reston, Arlington or Alexandria in Virginia.

The nation's most popular destinations such as Ferry Terminal Market in San Francisco, Union Market in Washington, D.C. and the Pearl District in San Antonio are now anchored not by department stores, as malls were, but rather restaurants and eateries, McMahon said. Some, like Trinity Grove in Dallas, act as restaurant incubators, drawing crowds who want to try new dining concepts...

Local planners and officials echoed McMahon's call for more walkable, healthier communities and projects especially since the area's population is expected to explode.

Suzanne Bradach, special projects manager for Lee Memorial Health Systems, outlined a plan to do just that on its 31-acre campus just south of the Coconut Point mall.

Instead of building an institutional acute care hospital, LMHA is creating a campus called Lee Health Village that will be a 'health and wellness destination,' Bradach said.

While the campus will have acute-care beds, an emergency room, surgery center and other features of a traditional hospital in a hotel-like setting, it will also have a 'healthy lifestyle center' where patients will learn how to cook more nutritiously, an 'app' bar where they can get medical care through telemedicine, and outdoor gardens where unsteady patients can do yoga or relearn to navigate uneven terrain.

'We're trying to create a healing and tranquil environment with a Zen feel,' she said. 'We want people to want to be there to grab a sandwich; we want people to want to be there.'

Meanwhile, downtown Bonita Springs is in the midst of an \$18.6 million overhaul with a similar goal — to get people to want to linger, said City Manager Carl Schwing.

'Old 41 was about getting from here to there,' he said. 'We have changed that philosophy.'

The downtown's overhaul will create landscaped roundabouts, widen sidewalks to make them safer for walkers and bikers, put power lines underground and build a new 'destination' library.

Though the eight-mile long overhaul initially was controversial, it now has support of community merchants, Schwing said.

To keep the community alive round-the-clock, Bonita also will soon have a new 48-unit condo project called Longitude, with one- and two-bedroom apartments starting in the upper \$200,000s. Set on one acre, the complex will also feature 15,000 square feet of retail including a coffee shop, restaurant and gym.

With a contemporary feel, the project is designed to appeal to buyers who want to live in a more urban environment rather than the usual frill-filled gated community, said developer Paul Benson of EBL Partners in Naples.

'The amenity is the street,' he said."

-- June Fletcher, Naples Daily News

[Read entire article](#)

## "See that billboard? It may see you too"

Englewood  
March 19-20  
Art and Craft Festival, Flagler Beach  
March 19-20  
Spring Antiques, Collectibles & Crafts Show, Mount Dora  
March 19-20  
Battle at Narcoossee Mill, St Cloud  
March 19-20  
Peace River National Arts Festival, Punta Gorda  
March 19-20  
Downtown Naples Festival of the Arts, Naples  
March 21  
Moonlight Carillon Concert at Bok Tower Gardens, Lake Wales  
March 23  
Climb to the Moon, Ponce Inlet

## South

March 4-13  
Miami International Film Festival, Miami  
March 4-16  
Festival of the Arts BOCA, Boca Raton  
March 5  
Conch Shell Blowing Contest, Key West  
March 5  
Evening on Antique Row, West Palm Beach  
March 5-6  
CityPlace Art Fair, West Palm Beach  
March 5-6  
Downtown Delray Beach Craft Festival, Delray Beach  
March 6  
Suntrust Sunday Jazz Brunch, Fort Lauderdale  
March 11-12  
Delray Beach St Patrick's Day Festival, Delray Beach  
March 11-12  
Historic House Tours, Key West  
March 11-13  
Fairchild's International Orchid Festival, Coral Gables  
March 12-13  
Original Marathon Seafood Festival, Marathon  
March 12-13  
Art Fest by the Sea, Juno Beach  
March 15-20  
Okeechobee County Fair, Okeechobee  
March 17  
Third Thursday Art Walk, Islamorada  
March 18-19  
Delray Beach Bacon & Bourbon Fest, Delray Beach  
March 18-21  
Art Boca Raton, Boca Raton  
March 19  
TurtleFest, Juno Beach  
March 19-20  
Coral Springs Festival of the



Photo: New York Times, Clearchannel Outdoor

"Pass a billboard while driving in the next few months, and there is a good chance the company that owns it will know you were there and what you did afterward.

Clear Channel Outdoor Americas, which has tens of thousands of billboards across the United States, will announce Monday that it has partnered with several companies, including AT&T, to track people's travel patterns and behaviors through their mobile phones.

By aggregating the trove of data from these companies, Clear Channel Outdoor hopes to provide advertisers with detailed information about the people who pass its billboards to help them plan more effective, targeted campaigns. With the data and analytics, Clear Channel Outdoor could determine the average age and gender of the people who are seeing a particular billboard in, say, Boston at a certain time and whether they subsequently visit a store.

'In aggregate, that data can then tell you information about what the average viewer of that billboard looks like', said Andy Stevens, senior vice president for research and insights at Clear Channel Outdoor. 'Obviously that's very valuable to an advertiser.'

Clear Channel and its partners — AT&T Data Patterns, a unit of AT&T that collects location data from its subscribers; PlacelQ, which uses location data collected from other apps to help determine consumer behavior; and Placed, which pays consumers for the right to track their movements and is able to link exposure to ads to in-store visits — all insist that they protect the privacy of consumers. All data is anonymous and aggregated, they say, meaning individual consumers cannot be identified.

Still, Stevens acknowledged that the company's new offering 'does sound a bit creepy.'

But, he added, the company was using the same data that mobile advertisers have been using for years, and showing certain ads to a specific group of consumers was not a new idea. 'It's easy to forget that we're just tapping into an existing data ecosystem,' he said...

Privacy advocates, however, have long raised questions about mobile device tracking, particularly as companies have melded this location information with consumers' online behavior to form detailed audience profiles.

Opponents contend that people often do not realize their location and behavior are being tracked, even if they have agreed at some point to allow companies to monitor them. And while nearly all of these companies claim that the data they collect is anonymous and aggregated — and that consumers can opt out of tracking at any time — privacy advocates are skeptical.

'People have no idea that they're being tracked and targeted,' said Jeffrey Chester, executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy. 'It is incredibly creepy, and it's the most recent intrusion into our privacy.'

The Federal Trade Commission has brought a number of cases related to mobile device tracking and the collection of geolocation information.

In 2013, the agency settled charges with the company behind a popular Android app that turned mobile devices into flashlights. The agency said the company's privacy policy did not inform consumers that it was sharing their location information with third parties like advertisers.

Last year, the agency settled charges against Nomi Technologies, a retail-tracking company that uses signals from shoppers' mobile phones to track their movements through stores. The

Arts, Coral Springs  
**March 19-20**  
 Rotary Key Biscayne Art Festival,  
 Key Biscayne  
**March 20**  
 Taste of the Islands, Marathon

## North

**March 1-April 2**  
 Garden Month at Cummer  
 Museum of Art and Gardens,  
 Jacksonville  
**March 4-6**  
 Lions Seafood Festival, St  
 Augustine  
**March 4-6**  
 Azalea Festival, Palatka  
**March 5-6**  
 The Gulf Coast Renaissance  
 Faire, Pensacola  
**March 10-13**  
 Amelia Island Concours  
 d'Elegance, Amelia Island  
**March 11-13**  
 The St Augustine Celtic Music &  
 Heritage Festival, St Augustine  
**March 11-13**  
 Nature Coast Civil War  
 Reenactment, Crystal River  
**March 12**  
 Gate River Run, Jacksonville  
**March 12-18**  
 Paddle Florida, Lake Talquin  
**March 17-20**  
 Suwannee Spring Fest, Live Oak  
**March 18**  
 Moon Over the Mounds, Crystal  
 River  
**March 18**  
 Wild Azalea Festival, White  
 Springs  
**March 18-19**  
 Smokin' in the Square, Pensacola  
**March 19**  
 City of Destin Run with the Dogs  
 5K, Destin  
**March 19**  
 Great Atlantic Seafood Festival,  
 Jacksonville Beach  
**March 19-20**  
 Old Town Art & Craft Show, St  
 Augustine  
**March 19-20**  
 Spring Garden Festival,  
 Gainesville  
**March 27**  
 Old City's Easter Parade, St  
 Augustine

[For many more events and details please visit the Orlando Times Travel Calendar here](#)



agency claimed that the company had misled consumers about their opt-out options...

Clear Channel Outdoor will offer Radar [the system] in its top 11 markets, including Los Angeles and New York, starting Monday, with plans to make it available across the country later this year. "

-- Sydney Ember, New York Times

[Read entire NYT article](#)

## "Judge rules against electronic billboards in Knoxville on appeal"



Photo: Knoxville News Sentinel

"A pair of billboards in Knoxville cannot be retrofitted to become electronic billboards, according to an opinion by Tennessee Court of Appeals Judge Charles D. Susano Jr.

In the opinion filed Thursday, Susano shot down the decade-old effort by billboard company Lamar to convert billboards at 6739 Kingston Pike and 406B North Peters Road.

PDF: [Opinion by Tennessee Court of Appeals Judge Charles D Susano Jr ruling in favor of Knoxville over billboard company Lamar](#)

In 2001 the city issued a hold on permits for new billboard construction. In 2006 Lamar decided to convert two vinyl billboards into LED displays. The city issued a stop-work order. Later that year the city filed a complaint in Chancery court to stop Lamar. The sign company filed a response against the city's complaint.

On Sept. 29, 2014 a Knox County Chancery Court judge opined in Knoxville's favor and denied Lamar's complaint by saying that there were no violations of free speech, that Knoxville had the right to govern its zoning regulations and that those regulations were applied fairly.

Lamar appealed the decision, saying Knoxville's ordinances conflicted with state law, violated the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and that the city's zoning ordinances were too broad.

'The (Chancery) court granted the City's motion and permanently enjoined Lamar from converting the billboards at issue from vinyl structures into billboards with LED digital displays. Lamar appeals. We affirm,' Susano wrote..."

-- Gerald Witt, Knoxville News Sentinel

[Read entire Knoxville News Sentinel article here](#)



