



BILLBOARD FACTS IN MARYLAND

AN ANALYSIS OF STATE BILLBOARD LAW AND REGULATIONS (Adapted from a Fact Sheet prepared by Scenic America)

1. Can communities in Maryland prohibit the construction of new billboards?

Yes. Section 8-736 of the Maryland Revised Statutes permits local governments to regulate outdoor signs, but local governments must also conform to all federal and state laws and regulations governing outdoor advertising signs along state-maintained highways.

2. Can communities prohibit billboards in certain aesthetically sensitive areas, such as historic districts, etc.?

Yes. Under the authority found in Section 8-736, communities may protect their special places, but local governments must also conform to all federal and state laws and regulations governing outdoor advertising signs along state-maintained highways.

3. Can communities in Maryland remove existing billboards via amortization?

Yes. While section 8-737 prohibits amortizing billboards along National Highway System and the old Federal Aid Primary Highways, nothing in that section prohibits amortizing billboards elsewhere.

4. Can communities require the downsizing of existing billboards?

Yes. This power is within the purview of section 8-736.

5. Can communities prohibit electronic or variable message signs?

Yes. Nothing in either Maryland laws or regulations prohibits this practice.

6. How much does a permit to erect a billboard cost?

From \$10 to \$35 per face, per year, depending on the size. In addition, outdoor advertising companies are required to obtain an annual outdoor advertising license from the Maryland State Highway Administration. Fees range from \$50 to \$700, depending on the number of structures.

7. Can municipalities impose permit fees on billboards in their communities?

State law allows this; however, according to the Maryland Department of Transportation, no communities do so currently.

8. Are billboard companies allowed to cut down trees on public land for the purpose of improving billboard visibility?

No.

9. Is there a state TODS program or similar signage program?

Yes. Maryland has extensive TODS and logo sign programs. For information, go to the State Highway Administration web site: www.sha.state.md.us/businesswithsha/logo.asp. Download the logo brochure. It provides detailed information on the program, including rules and regulations and application procedures.

10. Is there a state scenic byways program? Are billboards allowed along these scenic byways?

Maryland currently has 31 state-designated scenic byways. Federal law prohibits new billboards from being constructed along the state's designated byways. New permits for off-premise outdoor advertising signs along designated scenic National Highways and old Federal Aid Primary Highways are denied. Existing billboards are not affected by this restriction on new billboard construction.

11. Whom should I contact for more information?

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