



**TOWNSHIP OF PUSLINCH
GUIDELINE FOR THE REVIEW OF SIGN VARIANCE APPLICATIONS FOR
ELECTRONIC BILLBOARD SIGNS**

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1.0 Introduction

An Electronic (Digital) Billboard Sign is a Sign that is constructed so that the Sign Copy Content can be changed by either manual or electronic means.

In the case of a traditional Billboard, the Sign Copy Content is changed manually, and may be internally or externally illuminated. The illumination of a Billboard Sign typically only adjusts based on the time of day or night as well as ambient light conditions such as a cloudy day or bright sunlight.

In the case of an Electronic Billboard Sign, the hardware that Displays the Sign Copy Content is operated by software located on-site or from a remote operations centre located off-site. The Sign Copy Content Displayed on an Electronic Billboard Signs is fully changeable. It can be Displayed in a static manner as a sequence of individual slides Displayed for a fixed interval as in a slide show. The brightness of the Sign Copy Content can be set within specific limits and can be adjusted based on the time of day or night as well as ambient light conditions.

The Township of Puslinch Sign By-law regulates the types of Signs permitted in the Township. Electronic Billboard are considered “prohibited” unless the Sign Permit is approved by Council through a Sign Variance.

A Sign that is installed, displayed, or altered by a Variance issued by Council will be regulated by the most current Sign By-law.

If you wish to apply for a Variance to the Sign By-law, please refer to the “Sign Variance Process Guide” at Puslinch.ca/sign-variance-application.

2.0 Purpose of the Guide

The purpose of this Guide is to establish a set of criteria by which Sign Variance applications for Electronic Billboard Signs will be evaluated. Municipalities generally establish controls to mitigate the impacts of Electronic Billboard Signs on traffic safety, sensitive land uses and on the visual image of the communities in which they are located. Such controls may include the following:

- Identify specific locations and land uses in which the Sign will be considered
- Control views of the Sign from sensitive land uses such as residential zones
- Assess the impact of the Sign on views, the character and quality of the public realm
- Minimum separation distance between the Sign and sensitive land uses such as residences, open spaces and institutional uses
- Maximum number of Electronic Billboard Signs per property
- Distance between Electronic Billboard Signs
- Location of the Sign, relative to traffic control devices and important driver decision points such as intersections
- Maximum height of the Sign, above grade
- Maximum area of the Sign

- Minimum duration of message Display (Dwell Time)
- Transition between successive message Displays
- Message Sequencing
- Amount of information Displayed
- Sign Brightness and Luminance
- Duration of illumination/setting times when the Sign should be turned off
- Sign Animation/motion

3.0 Guidelines for the Review of Sign Variance Applications

Sign Variance Applications for Electronic Billboard Signs shall be reviewed with regard to their impact on the character and traffic safety of the surrounding and planned context in which they are proposed.

In addition to the provisions of current Sign By-law, the following guidelines and requirements will be applied in the review of Sign Variance Applications for Electronic Billboard Signs:

3.1 Waiver

The owner of the property upon which an Electronic Billboard Signs is installed shall execute a waiver form releasing the Township from liability and shall further indemnify the Township against any claim, action or process for damage and/or injury that arises as a result of the installation or existence of the Electronic Billboard Sign. The Township will provide the required wording for the waiver. The signed waiver will form a part of a complete Sign Variance Application.

3.2 Location

Electronic Billboard Signs shall only be considered in the following areas of the Township:

- Highway 401
- Highway 6
- Commercial/Industrial Zone

3.3 Number of Signs, Separation Distances, Heights, Setbacks, Maximum Sign Face Area

Despite separation distances and setbacks outlined in this Guide, only one Billboard or Electronic Billboard Sign is permitted on a Property. If there is an existing Ground Sign, Council will consider the impact of permitting a combination of Billboards, Electronic Billboard Signs and Ground Signs on a Property, and may prohibit some of the Signs.

Electronic Billboard Signs shall be positioned relative to one another so that no more than one Billboard and/or Electronic Billboard Signs shall be visible to an approaching driver at the same time.

No part of a Billboard or Electronic Billboard Signs shall:

- Exceed 5 m height above an adjacent roadway or 10 m height if the Sign is facing the 401
- Be located closer than 10 m to the front lot line
- Be located within 400 m of any limit of a County Road or MTO Highway without written permission from the road authority
- Be multi-faced
- Exceed the maximum Sign Face Area of 20 m² per sign face

No part of a Billboard or Electronic Billboard Signs shall be:

- Located closer than **300m** from another Billboard or Electronic Billboard Sign on the same side of the highway
- Located closer than **3km** from an existing Billboard or Electronic Billboard Sign on the same side of the highway
- Located closer than **300m** measured in a straight line from a Residential Use

3.4 Location Relative to Traffic Control Devices and Important Driver Decision Points

Driver decision points include, intersections, on ramps, off ramps, interchanges, merge areas, right/left turn lanes and close to traffic signals, toll plazas, pedestrian crossings, rail crossings, work zones, where the cognitive demands on drivers are greatest.

- An Electronic Billboard Sign shall not be erected within 250 m of a major traffic sign and 500 m of a driver decision point.

When considering a Sign Variance Application, Council reserves the right to require a Traffic Safety Review Study.

3.5 Sign Transitions

To minimize these potentially distracting effects transitions are prohibited on Electronic Billboards. Displays on Electronic Billboards may be changed a maximum of once per 30 calendar days.

3.6 Sign Animations

Animation refers to any motion in the advertisement, including video, special effects within a single frame and transition, movement and rotation between successive frames.

- There shall be no animation, flashing movement or appearance of movement on an Electronic Billboard Sign.

3.7 Amount of Information Displayed

It takes approximately one second for a road user to read one word. The height of each character on the message Display shall be sufficient to ensure that the message is clearly legible over the entire viewing distance.

- Interactive billboard messages that permit, support or encourage interactive communication with drivers in real time shall not be permitted. These include Electronic Billboard Signs that respond to text messages, phone calls or e-mails from passing drivers or that request immediate response by text, phone, e-mail etc.

3.8 Sign Brightness and Luminance

Brightness is the perceived intensity of a source of light. It is the appearance of light to the viewer. Luminance is the amount of light leaving a surface in a particular direction or the amount of light that is deflected off a surface. Sign Brightness is a function of sign luminance, the background against which the sign is viewed, the driver's age, level of adaptation of the eyes, and atmospheric conditions such as fog. Brightness can be measured as luminance, in candelas per square meter (cd/m^2) or illuminance in foot-candles (fc). Luminance is the amount of light that is emitted from a surface, while illuminance is the amount of light falling upon a surface. The human eye is drawn to the brightest objects in a field of view, and this is generally referred to as the "moth effect". A brightly illuminated Electronic Billboard Sign could draw a driver's attention away from the road, other vehicles and traffic devices. This is of particular concern at nighttime, dusk or dawn and during periods of inclement weather.

The maximum luminance level for a Electronic Billboard Sign shall be:

- 5000cd/m^2 from sunrise to sunset (One Nit = One Candela per m^2 (cd/m^2))
- 200cd/m^2 from sunset to sunrise (One Nit = One Candela per m^2 (cd/m^2))
- The maximum illumination level for a Billboard or Electronic Billboard Sign shall be 0.3 lux above ambient light levels (One Lux = 0.093 foot-candles (fc))
- All Billboard or Electronic Billboard Signs shall be equipped with ambient light sensors and automatic dimmers that control the light output relative to ambient conditions

To measure illumination, the International Sign Association (2011) has provided the following equation to determine the distance away from the Electronic Billboard Sign, at which the measurement shall be taken:

- Measurement Distance = Square Root of (Sign Area (m^2) x 100)

4.0 Application for a Sign Permit and Sign Variance

The current Sign By-law established the Sign Permit application process, outlines the authority delegated to the Sign Administrator, and the process for submitting a Sign Variance Application. The Sign By-law states that an application for a Sign Permit and/or Sign Variance shall be submitted using forms prescribed by the Sign Administrator.

- Application for Sign Variance Request Form;
- A letter outlining the rationale for the Variance;
- The written authorization of the Sign Owner if not the same as the applicant;
- Written authorization from the Property Owner(s) and occupant(s) of the Premises that have authorized the application;
- The signed Waiver noted in Section 3.1 of this Guide;
- A Traffic Safety Review Study noted in Section 3.4 of this Guide;
- An Urban Design Impact Assessment noted in Section 3.11 and further described in Appendix "A" of this Guide;
- Where applicable, proof of approval for the proposed Sign from all other governmental authorities having jurisdiction;
- The fee set out in the User Fees By-law.

Fill out the Sign Variance Form at puslinch.ca/forms/sign-variance-application/.

Upon receipt of all application forms, letters and fees, the Sign Administrator (or delegate) will review all information and contact the applicant if additional information is required. Once the application is deemed to be complete, the Variance will be presented to Council for consideration, as outlined in Section 4.4.2 of the current Sign By-law. The applicant will be advised of the date of this meeting and will have the opportunity to speak before Council, if they wish.

5.0 Definitions

Billboard Sign

Means a Ground Sign that is owned and maintained by a Person engaged in the rental or leasing of the Sign Face Area for advertising goods, services, or facilities that are not sold or offered on the property where the Sign is Displayed and is either single faced or double faced.

Brightness

The visual sensation experienced by an observer. It is affected by the luminance of the sign, size of the sign, contrast, the viewing position and individual characteristics of the observer

Character

The aggregate of the features including the attributes of the physical, natural and social dimensions of a particular area or neighbourhood

Compatible

That which enhances an established community and coexists with existing development without unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding area

Context

An area that is within a 250 m (820.21 ft.) radius of the centre point of the location of the proposed Electronic Billboard Sign

Double-Faced Sign

A sign having two (2) sign faces of equal area and proportions which are located exactly opposite each other on the sign structure

Driver Decision Points

Crucial areas where a driver's attention must not be distracted from the task of safely navigating the roadway, including but not limited to intersections, pedestrian crossings, rail crossings, on/off ramps, toll plazas, work zones, traffic lights, traffic signs, traffic signals and other traffic control devices etc.

Electronic Message Centre

Means a Sign that is capable of Displaying works, symbols, figures, images or other messages digitally that can be electronically changed by remote and/or automatic means

Enhance

To complement and assist in furthering the aesthetic and intrinsic value of a neighbourhood, site or structure

Frame

A complete static Display screen on an Electronic Billboard Signs

Glance Duration

The length of time for which a driver looks at a sign

Glance Frequency

The number of glances made by a driver at a sign

Height

The vertical distance measured from the average elevation of the finished grade immediately below a sign to the highest point of the sign and includes any support structure

Illuminance

The amount of light falling upon a surface

Landmark

A building, object or feature of a landscape, neighbourhood or the City that is easily seen and recognized from a distance, especially one that enables people to establish their location

Luminance

The amount of light that is emitted by or reflected from the surface of a sign

Lux

The metric unit of measure for illuminance One Lux = 0.093 foot-candles

Display

Includes authorizing, allowing or permitting the Display of a Sign

Dwell Time

Means the minimum duration that fixed Sign Copy Content on an Electronic Message Centre is Displayed.

Major Traffic Signs

All regulatory traffic signs. Regulatory traffic signs give directives that must be obeyed

Message Sequencing

The use of a sequence of Displays and messages as part of a single advertisement

Multi-Faced Sign

A ground sign having more than two (2) sign faces up to a maximum of four (4) faces, each face being of equal area and proportion to the other

Property

Means a lot which has specific boundaries and which is capable of legal transfer

Sign

Means any device, object or thing which directs attention to and which is designed to convey a message and that is placed for the purpose of advertising goods and services offered, for identifying a business, organization, or enterprise, and/or for conveying any other type of message. This definition includes, but is not limited to, the types of Signs specifically defined in the Sign By-law and includes the supports, braces, or other appurtenances associated with such Signs

Sign Area

The entire area of a sign face

Sign Copy Content

Means any colour, graphic, logo, symbol, word, numeral, text, image, message, picture, or combination thereof Displayed on a Sign Face

Sign Face

Means the surface of a Sign, including the border and frame but excluding the supporting structure, upon which information and advertising is Displayed

Streetscape

The character of the street, including the street right-of-way, adjacent properties between the street right-of-way and building faces. Thus, the creation of a streetscape is achieved by the development of both public and private lands and may include planting, furniture, paving, etc.

Variance

Means a permission granted by the Sign Administrator pursuant the Sign By-law (or by Council on appeal from the Sign Administrator or for a Variance request not within the scope of authority of the Sign Administrator), to Install and Display a Sign in a particular location which the Sign, but for such permission, would not comply with the Sign By-law

APPENDIX “A” –Design Impact Assessment

TOWNSHIP OF PUSLINCH DESIGN IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF ELECTRONIC BILLBOARD SIGNS REQUIREMENTS

Purpose

The purpose of the design impact assessment is to evaluate the visual impact of a proposed Electronic Billboard Sign on the **character** of the **context** within which it is to be located. This also includes an assessment of the impact on the use of the spaces from which it will be visible and on the physical elements that make up those spaces including trees, streetscape elements, public art, sidewalks, parks and open spaces, amenity areas etc. Where applicable, the design impact assessment will specify mitigation measures to eliminate any negative impacts in order to achieve an Electronic Billboard Sign that is **compatible** with the context in which it is to be located.

Required Information

In addition to the Sign Permit application process outlined in the current Sign By-law and the Sign Variance application process outlined in the By-law and this Guide, the following information shall be provided as part of a Design Impact Assessment:

A **context** map/plan drawn to a minimum metric scale of 1:500 that shows the **context** around the proposed sign. The **context** shall be defined as an area that is within a 250m radius of the centre point of the location of the proposed Electronic Billboard Sign

The **context** plan shall show all existing features including the following:

- All existing and approved developments
- Sensitive land uses including but not limited to residential buildings, residential uses within mixed use developments, schools, hospitals
- Landmark buildings and features
- Street names, roads and highways
- Street trees, landscape areas, sidewalks and all existing features on the boulevards
- Street furniture, light standards, traffic lights, bus stops and shelters
- Existing and approved billboard signs and ground signs
- Public art installations
- Cultural Heritage Resources including Heritage designated and listed buildings, parks, monuments and features of historical significance
- Public art installations
- Public and private open space and amenity areas
- Significant views and vistas where applicable

- Provide accurate 3D images of the proposed Electronic Billboard Sign within the **context** as defined above. The images shall be taken from a minimum of four different directions identified on the context plan.

Provide a Design Impact Summary which shall include the following:

- A description of the **character** of the context including the scale and range of building heights, **character** of the **streetscape**, land uses, significant features such as heritage buildings, important views and vistas, natural features, public art, architectural style etc. This description shall be supported by images and any other illustrations.
- A written analysis of the merits of the proposed billboard sign as it relates to the scale and **character** of the **context**, its impact on existing conditions and how it will enhance the design and visual image of the existing and planned **character** of the **context**. The written analysis shall also demonstrate how the proposed Electronic Billboard Sign satisfactorily address the guidelines especially with regard to identifying and eliminating negative impacts on sensitive land uses including residential uses within areas designated for mixed use and residential uses in mixed use developments.