



International Dark-Sky Association

"...to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies through environmentally responsible outdoor lighting."

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County of San Diego Planning & Development Services Advanced Planning Division
5510 Overland Avenue
San Diego, CA 92123

To County of San Diego Planning and Development Services Advanced Planning Division,

I am writing to you to express concern that San Diego County is considering allowing the use of electronic billboards. This seems to be in direct conflict with the County's existing ordinance on light pollution that seeks to "minimize light pollution to allow citizens of the County to view and enjoy the night environment and to protect the Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories from the detrimental effect that light pollution has on astronomical research."

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Allowing electronic billboards would reverse these night sky protections that are in place for your citizens and the astronomers at both Palomar Observatory and Mount Laguna Observatory. Nighttime use of electronic billboards makes them a tremendous source of light pollution. Much of the light emitted from these excessively bright devices directly brightens the night sky making them a significant threat to astronomical research, one of Southern California's most valuable economic and technical assets.

While the light of an LED electronic billboard does not shine directly upwards, it is instead projected sideways at angles that are above the horizontal. Research has shown that light emitted in this direction produces more light polluting skyglow than light emitted at higher angles, and that the effects of this low-angle light are visible over a much broader area.

Because of their detrimental affects on astronomy, earlier this year the State of Arizona outlawed the use of electronic billboards located within 75-miles of astronomical observatories. It is certain that permitting the use of electronic billboards within San Diego County would have a negative impact on the observatory's nightly astronomical research programs and forever change the character of the County's back country.

Electronic billboards are significantly brighter than standard billboards and the reach of their sideways-directed light extends far beyond the roadways, making them an annoying source of light trespass, not just for motorists, but also for anyone in their path.

IDA Offices

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Given the legitimate concerns expressed by others regarding electronic billboards' excessive energy use, their potential as a distraction to roadway motorists and the reasons provided above, I request that you do not allow the use of electronic billboards in the County.

Sincerely,

W. Scott Kardel
Managing Director
International Dark-Sky Association

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Washington, DC, USA | Hever, Belgium | Turrumurra, New South Wales, Australia