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OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

December 3, 2007

Mr. John Campbell
Director, Right of Way Division
Texas Department of Transportation
125 E. 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2488

Dear Mr. Campbell:

As Chief of Police I support electronic displays on billboards. I commend TX DOT's recent decision to consider allowing the use of such displays in Texas. Our local experience with these displays has clearly demonstrated the safe and effective use of this technology. In addition, I have included my comments before TX DOT on Wednesday November 28 for your review.

Good Morning. Richard Wiles, Chief of Police of El Paso.

Texas - - and I don't know if anybody noticed, but Mr. Smith and I are actually color coordinated. I just caught that.

Anyway, I'd like to read into the record a letter from the Honorable Mayor of El Paso, John Cook, and then say just a couple of words:

"The City of El Paso looked into the issue of billboards several years ago. As a result, we had a comprehensive rewrite of the ordinance regarding off-premise signage. Subsequently, we examined the potential for improving the image billboards had in our community, and amended the ordinance to allow for electronic billboards.

We have found that they are not only accepted by the community, but are more attractive than other technologies. As Mayor of the sixth largest city in Texas, I would certainly encourage other cities to consider modernizing their off-premise sign ordinances.



As a result of our experience, the City of El Paso supports TxDOT's efforts to allow us to expand our program to those highways under state jurisdiction."

That's from Mayor Cook. In regards to the Police Department's stance on this issue, there's two major issues that I see. One is the issue of safety. Certainly traffic crashes and the injuries and fatalities that are related to those are of great concern to me as a law enforcement professional. And I would not want to have something on the roadway that would distract the drivers.

But I have to tell you that in my conversations with the deputy chief in charge of our traffic units, certainly over the last five years that we've done research, we have found no instances of traffic collisions being caused as a result of inattentiveness for billboards.

And as Mr. Smith mentioned, the electronic billboards have gone up on city streets, eight of them, and since they've been up over the last several months, we have had no instances that they have contributed to any driver inattention that has resulted in a collision. So I don't believe that that's an issue. Certainly not within the City of El Paso.

And the second issue is in regards to the support that these billboards can give to law enforcement in times of crisis. As you're well aware, when an Amber Alert occurs, TxDOT flashes information on their electronic message boards, but it's all -- there's no photos, it's all writing.

And the problem with that is, the information does not catch the attention of the traveling motorist many times and it's not -- and because human beings are visual animals, it is not as -- it doesn't give us the same impact as if we can put up a photo of the missing a child, of a vehicle involved, of the subject that's involved.

So we think these billboards will be a great asset to any community, certainly in El Paso, by providing our community with information related to crises such Amber Alerts or other emergencies that could occur within the city. Thank you very much.

Yours truly,



Richard D. Wiles
Chief of Police

