

FHWA Final CEVMS Report Summary

Key Points regarding the FHWA Research

- The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) contracted the Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) to study the effects of digital billboards on driver attention and distraction in 2007
- This study was aimed at determining if digital billboards posed an unsafe driver distraction and was based on how long drivers took their eyes off the road when in the presence of digital billboards.
- FHWA emphasized that the study employed highly accurate state of the art research methodology and eye tracking equipment, which ensures a high level of confidence in the eventual findings.
- The study was completed in early 2010, and a draft report was subjected to peer review in 2012.
- On December 30, 2013, FHWA released its final report

Results from the FHWA study indicate the following:

The FHWA conducted its research on digital billboards based on an eye-glance analysis in two test markets: Reading, PA, and Richmond, VA.

In both cities, digital billboards were located on freeways and local arterials.

1.

The presence of digital billboards does not appear to be related to a decrease in looking toward the road ahead, which is consistent with earlier industry sponsored field research studies (VTTI).

2.

The longest fixation to a digital billboard was 1.34 seconds, and to a standard billboard it was 1.28 seconds, both of which are well below the accepted standard.¹

1. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), safety concerns arise when a driver's eyes are diverted from the roadway by glances that continue for more than 2.0 seconds.

3.

When comparing the gaze at a CEVMS versus a standard billboard, the drivers in this study were more likely to gaze at CEVMS than at standard billboards.

4.

The researchers were careful to note the FHWA study adds to the knowledge base of digital billboard safety, but does not "present definitive answers" to the questions investigated.

Bottom Line:

Digital billboard glances are well within federal safety standards concerning driver distraction.