



# Memorandum

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Mayor Sam Liccardo

**SUBJECT:** ELECTRONIC BILLBOARDS  
PRIORITY SETTING

**DATE:** 2/23/21

**APPROVED:**

**DATE:**

## RECOMMENDATION

1. Direct the City Manager to pull the Electronic Billboard Policy work scope off of the '20-'21 City Roadmap among the projects to be completed by June 2021.
2. Agendize the Electronic Billboard Policy for the March 9th City Council meeting to revisit the scope of work with the following considerations:
  - a. Provide a staff workload analysis of the remaining components of the Phase 2 Electronic Billboard item, including the remaining environmental review and an overview of cost savings that could result from eliminating portions of Phase 2.
  - b. Propose several options to Council, including elimination of all further work on freeway-facing electronic billboards from Phase 2.

## BACKGROUND

At a 2018 Council vote, I unequivocally opposed consideration of expansion of electronic freeway billboard signage beyond San Jose's Downtown. At best eyesores, and at worst, a dangerous distraction to motorists, I've characterized such signage as a giveaway to the advertising industry, without any clear public benefit to the community or taxpayers. I emphasized that "diving into Phase 2 work (relating to citywide electronic signage facing freeways) prior to understanding the impacts of Phase 1 (regarding Downtown signage on City-owned sites) will create serious unintended consequences that could prove difficult to unravel."

We now face just that: the prospect of a citywide electronic billboard program advancing before residents and the Council have any sense of the impacts of allowing electronic signage Downtown. We shouldn't be surprised that residents have begun a drumbeat of vocal opposition, joined by environmental and other non-profit organizations.

We understand from staff's supplemental memorandum that City Council will not have the opportunity to discuss whether to continue staff's work on electronic billboards during the City Roadmap discussion. Accordingly, we must clarify—and revise as necessary—the remaining scope of work at the March 9<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting. This will allow staff the opportunity to conserve time and resources for more pressing items necessitated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.