



Project Number

BE288

Project Manager

Robert Jessee

FDOT Right of Way Office

Principal Investigator

Maxim Dulebenets

Florida State University

Florida Department of Transportation Research Establishment of Effective Control Factors to Achieve Federal Enforcement Consistency with the Highway Beautification Act

October 2017

Current Situation

One of the pleasures of driving in Florida is enjoying a beautiful and diverse landscape. The quality of this view is critical to a state's image for visitors and those considering relocation as well as to residents' enjoyment. To ensure the continued beauty of our highways, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Highway Beautification Act (HBA) in October 1965 as part of an initiative to preserve America's beauty. The HBA was intended to beautify the Interstate Highway System and other federal-aid roads by controlling outdoor advertisements and screening or removing junkyards. Proper administration of the HBA depends on accurate sign inventories, cooperation of state and local officials, adequate funding for inspection and remediation, among other factors. Issues arising in recent years have led to an inconsistent and inefficient implementation of the HBA.



The Highway Beautification Act is intended to prevent commercial sign clutter on federal highways.

Research Objectives

Florida State University researchers collected information from state departments of transportation across the country to develop a picture of current practice and key issues regarding the HBA and to propose a set of baseline standards.

Project Activities

Using an interview and questionnaire process, the researchers conducted a survey among state departments of transportation. Responses were acquired from all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The responses were formulated as 34 statements that summarized existing practices and issues associated with the outdoor advertising component (OAC) of the HBA. The summary statements cover topics such as maintenance of sign inventories, removal of vegetation, definitions of area types, penalties for illegal signs, and others. A slight majority of states were found to have laws governing outdoor signs that were more restrictive than federal law. Whereas a large majority of states have a program to implement OAC, only a minority of states evaluates the consistency and effects of their OAC programs.

The 34 summary statements became the basis for a set of baseline standards to address the identified regulatory difficulties and inconsistencies. Furthermore, a number of important criteria, which should be considered throughout the implementation of developed baseline standards, were proposed. The 24 baseline standards cover many aspects of administration and implementation of an OAC program. They are divided into six areas: General; Definition of Areas for OAC; Federal OAC Program Administration; Issues/Inconsistencies Associated with the Federal OAC Program Implementation; and Other. The researchers also provided practical guidance through prioritized lists of standards from each level of OAC administration: DOT, state, and federal.

Project Benefits

The guidance produced by this project will assist Florida and other states in establishing more effective OAC programs.

For more information, please see www.fdot.gov/research/.