

Communication from Public

Name: David Ewing

Date Submitted: 07/17/2023 09:55 PM

Council File No: 22-0392

Comments for Public Posting: The City has spent many millions of dollars to establish and protect its ability to regulate billboard signage that otherwise would overwhelm our built environment. I remember a few years back when the billboard industry was attacking the City with over twenty concurrent lawsuits. This is an industry without scruples, that put up hundreds if not thousands of illegal billboards without effective challenge by the City for years. When the City finally pressed the issue, the industry found a way to use its illegal billboards as leverage to negotiate for installation of digital billboards, which were just coming in at the time. I also remember when one former Councilmember went to bat for the billboard industry by persuading her colleagues that unless they allowed a billboard company an exemption from the safety standard barring billboards right next to freeways, a park in a low-income neighborhood would be deprived of furniture and amenities. Aware of the public relations nightmare that would result from depriving underserved children, her colleagues caved in, and digital billboards went up along the freeway, flipping images every few seconds to assure they caught drivers' attention. The billboards are still there, but what ever happened to the amenities? Of course, as everyone involved was aware, the victory was not just for two billboards. It was all about setting a legal precedent: by granting that exemption, the City undermined its ability to enforce the safety measure elsewhere. So Councilmembers and president Krekorian, when you vote on this TCN proposition, don't pretend you're only deciding whether to participate in profits from MTA signage. Passing this would similarly undermine the City's ability to regulate an industry that lives by suing the City - and by getting the Council to sabotage itself. This will end up costing the City enormously in both legal expenses and quality of life. Don't take us there.