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Title: Investigation of the Potential Relationship Between Crash Occurrence and the Presence of Digital Advertising Billboards in Alabama and Florida

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Abstract: Increase in the number and sophistication of digital advertising billboard signs on US roadways, raises safety concerns over potential contribution of such signs to traffic crashes. Various earlier crash analyses, and behavioral studies resulted in somewhat contradictory conclusions, indicating a need for further research. This paper describes an epidemiological study that analyzed historical crash records from the states of Alabama and Florida to examine potential correlations between crash locations and their proximity to digital advertising billboards. First, the research team identified locations of digital advertising billboards along major limited-access facilities in Alabama and Florida and selected eighteen suitable sites for analysis. Eighteen control sites immediately downstream of the digital billboard locations were also considered. Then, historical crash data were retrieved for all study sites and crash rates were calculated for digital advertising billboards influence zones and adjacent control sites. While variations were observed from site to site, the overall results were consistent between the two states. The crash data analyses revealed that the presence of digital billboards increased the overall crash rates at digital advertising billboard influence zones by 25% in Florida and 29% in Alabama compared to control sites. Moreover, sideswipe and rear-end crashes were found to be overrepresented at digital advertising billboard influence zones compared to control sites. This study presents a contribution to the traffic safety research as it provides objective and dependable evidence that can help to establish potential links between digital advertising billboard presence and crash occurrence. The study findings can help inform future public policy, and set the foundation for further regulation of digital advertising billboard use in the future.

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