

January 28th, 2022, Airport Commission Report Submission for D1LG Meeting

A special meeting was held on 1/26/22 regarding the Initial Study for adding digital billboards at SJC. This consisted of two locations with 3 digital billboards and 1 traditional billboard. Clear Channel is guaranteeing a minimum of \$490k annual revenue plus 10% of ad slots. Additionally, following city policy 6-4, Clear Channel will remove traditional billboards from 8 locations (which could mean 1 or 2 billboards, depending upon the specific location).¹ The locations are to be determined, but they are supposed to be “From locations that are unsightly or incompatible with surrounding land uses (as outlined in Council Policy 6-4).”²

Some of the reasons why I Voted No on the Initial Study (EIR Substitute)³

1. **Energy Use was off by 50%** in the Initial Study. For a study of this import, how can an error of this magnitude be made?⁴ It is inexcusable. What else could be wrong in a report so thoroughly vetted that isn't obvious? Granted, the city isn't paying for the generation of the document (although they are managing the process and there is an opportunity cost of that effort). It isn't like this is a typo, as the power consumption is significant.
2. These two billboards will consume the equivalent of **24 houses worth of electricity**. This might not sound like much, but what happens during a brownout? Will these make the difference between your lights being on or off? Maybe it won't make a difference, but what happens when 100 more billboards replace the traditional billboards in the City of San Jose? Then, we are talking a couple of thousand homes of additional power; that is **significant for a city trying to be carbon neutral**.
3. It doesn't appear **Lick Observatory was consulted for this project**. It isn't clear the extent of the city's consultation with Lick Observatory in developing policy 6-4. This is another area that deserves further study.
4. I am still not convinced
 1. In-Kind revenue. Airport staff did not provide any written evidence to back up their claim from their 12/21/21 memo that the 10% of ad spots would equal 250k annually. A bottoms-up analysis suggests \$40k to 50k per year. Again, this is a significant difference.⁵
 2. These billboards were better defined than some of the other things (future hotel, etc.) that were in the Airport Master plan in 2019. With that said, if they had been in there,

¹ Policy 6-4 can be found here

[https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/50829/637153744794670000#:~:text=Council%20Policy%206%2D4%20was,within%20five%20\(5\)%20years.](https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/50829/637153744794670000#:~:text=Council%20Policy%206%2D4%20was,within%20five%20(5)%20years.)

² Page 12, <https://www.flysanjose.com/sites/default/files/commission/2022-01-26%20Airport%20Commission.pdf>

³ To see some of the concerns expressed by three of the Airport Commissioners at the 1/26/22 meeting, check out https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1jGIWFaYRWF_sYZbShskw4zuuzXOdfFoBCFg0mw_anCs/edit?usp=sharing

⁴ See this spreadsheet for detailed calculations https://sanjoseca-my.sharepoint.com/:x:/g/personal/airportcom1_sanjoseca_gov/EahFUMifL2FEnk6OVYQVSS5YB8yGGg2-4fTHLLI4aauUb-g?e=Nbjrib

they would have probably sailed through without controversy given the scope of that document.

3. There are still misstatements in the literature, such as page 6 of Clear Channel's presentation to the Airport Commission. It states, " 8 removed billboards currently using PG&E energy sources. Their energy will be permanently removed and will result in net lowered energy consumption."⁶ They could not provide what the power consumption for a static billboard.

According to a paper written by Geoff Young, the annual power consumption of a Static Billboard is 7 MWh (7,008 kWh).⁷ This is probably the worst-case as it is using Halide Lamps and not LEDs. If 8 "faces" were removed, then this would equal 56 MW hours.....but, as the Environmental Consultant said the other day, the power consumption of the three digital billboard faces is 140 MW-hours. Also, shouldn't Clear Channel be removing 12 "faces" per policy 6-4, since they are putting up 3 digital billboard faces?

5. The public comments made great points. One that especially resonated is that the city should be focusing on getting more flights as that would generate more revenue than billboards. Additionally, the No on Digital Billboards group suggests that the city put out an RFP looking for ways SJC can generate revenue from its existing assets.

Recommendations to Council:

The Airport Commission then voted that this project should not move forward and made the following recommendations.

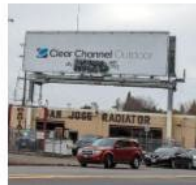
⁶ Page 6, <https://www.flysanjose.com/sites/default/files/commission/San%20Jose%20Billboard%20EIR%20-%20Public%20III.pdf>

⁷ Page 4, https://www.scenic.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/EXCERPT_The_Basics_of_Digital_Signage_and_Energy_Consumption1.pdf

01/26/22 - Potential Recommendations from Airport Commission Regarding Digital Billboards

- Airport should study multiple ways to generate unencumbered revenue beyond digital billboards (e.g. solar farms, property development, etc.)
- The city should be enforcing illegally constructed digital billboards (e.g. Highway 87, and 101/880) as well as those billboards that are blighted.
- If the city proceeds with the digital billboard proposal then
 - Green power mitigation above and beyond San Jose Clean Energy
 - Billboard illumination and operation times should be coordinated with Lick Observatory for both digital & traditional billboards. Dark hours between midnight and 6 AM, minimum.
 - The city should closely examine the RFP process for future billboards.

Blighted Billboard
Lincoln near Parkmoor



Blighted Billboard
Winchester near I-280

Finally

It has been 3+ years since the City of San Jose enacted policy 6-4 to begin the process for allowing digital billboards. Vision Zero for pedestrian and bicyclist safety has become a bigger priority, as well as the 2030 Carbon Neutral plans. Additionally, we heard from hundreds of people say that they don't want digital billboards. Additionally, the city should find ways to enforce existing ordinances that prevent illegally operated digital billboards. It is time for city council to reexamine this policy.

Next Airport Commission Meeting

02/14/22 at 6 PM – Meeting details will be available at <https://www.flysanjose.com/airport-commission>

And remember, spread the word #FlySJC

Submitted by Ken Pyle, Airport Commission Vice Chair.

The above represents Ken Pyle's interpretation and opinions and does not represent SJC, its administration, or the City of San Jose.