



Reno City Council
1 East First Street
Reno, NV 89501

August 24, 2019

Re: Agenda Item E.1 – Changeable digital gas station price signs

Dear Mayor Schieve and City Council Members,

Thanks very much for your vote on August 14, unanimously approving the text amendment that will allow digital displays for fuel prices in areas where digital signs are currently prohibited, but, with regulations that will prohibit constantly flipping, bright signs.

This is an important issue to Reno residents who want to maintain the scenic character of corridors like Mt. Rose Highway and prevent the nuisance of flashing digital signs near their neighborhoods.

We are urging you now to approve the text amendment again for a first reading. Our reasons are the same that we presented to you and to the staff previously. The regulations represent a fair compromise allowing gas station owners who switch to digital displays the ease of changing their fuel prices remotely, even in areas like Mt. Rose Highway where digitals are prohibited. It will protect nearby property owners and our scenic corridors with a low nighttime brightness level and a one-hour flip time.

Yet, the sign and gas station industry representatives and some sign owners were opposed at the last hearing.

As you know, originally, Scenic Nevada asked for a 24-hour flip time to prevent flashing signs, which was recommended for approval by the planning commission and staff. But, in an effort to compromise, we switched our request to a one-hour flip time when we learned that gas stations change their prices on average twice a day, and sometimes more frequently.

We tried in two conference calls to find a compromise that would suit them. But, they wouldn't budge and refused to accept any limits on flip times and objected to the low brightness level.

A flip time is important, as staff said at the last hearing, to prevent the frequent flipping of prices on gas station signs like signs we see along the freeway in Carson City today. (Photo attached) They change price and color every four seconds, displaying one grade of gasoline after another. The fuel price doesn't change, just the grade of gas being advertised and the color: red to green to red,

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every four seconds. The bright, constantly flipping prices and colors is designed to distract drivers and, if allowed in Reno, will mar the scenic beauty of the drive up Mt. Rose Highway with carnival-style signs.

Without a minimum flip time of one hour, which you already voted once to approve, the design and development standards that have protected this scenic corridor for decades, and which all previous businesses and property owners have complied with, would be subverted for no legitimate business purpose.

And staff said at the last hearing that the prohibition on flashing included in the proposed text amendment will not limit the frequency of changes.

To us and many in the community, a measureable flip time to prevent constantly changing digital signs in protected areas is absolutely necessary. Without it we may end up with a flashing sign on Mt. Rose Highway like the sign in Carson City.

Staff and the planning commission also recommended approval of a 150-nit nighttime brightness limit. That is also the recommendation for digital signs of the International Dark Skies Association and the Viridian Group, which conducted a study in the Truckee Meadows commissioned by Scenic Nevada that compared brightness levels of digital and non-digital signs at night. As you may recall, the council also approved the same nighttime brightness limit for the drive-through menu boards that were recently allowed on Mt. Rose Highway and other areas where digitals are prohibited.

Thanks again for the unanimous vote on August 14 and for all you do to preserve the scenic qualities of Reno. We think this text amendment is a step in the right direction and hope you will continue to support it at the first and second readings with a one-hour flip time and a 150-nit brightness level.

Sincerely,

Lori Wray, Director
Scenic Nevada

