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## Michigan study shows crashes increase near digital billboards

ANN ARBOR, MI – A new study finds that while the total number of crashes on Michigan’s highways decreased between 2004 and 2012, crashes increased on roadways where digital billboards had been introduced.

Data provided by the Michigan Department of Transportation showed that there were nine percent fewer overall crashes in 2012 compared to 2004. Yet in areas where digital billboards had gone up crash rates increased, and rates were higher the closer one got to a digital billboard.

A half-mile away from digital billboards crashes increased 2.3%, while at a quarter-mile away they went up 7%, and within a tenth of a mile the crash rates rose by 7.2%. “The proportions of digital billboard-proximal traffic crashes on Michigan freeways are significantly higher ‘after’ than ‘before’ the digital billboards were installed,” said Dr. Nadiya Fink, Assistant Professor at Albion College, who analyzed the data.

“These findings are shocking,” said Mary Tracy, president of Scenic America. “While better designed cars and advances in traffic engineering are leading to overall safer roads, the crash rates near digital billboards fly in the face of that trend. These results should alarm anyone concerned about the safety of drivers and passengers on our country’s roadways.”

Dr. Fink analyzed crash data from Michigan’s Lower Peninsula in both dry and wet road conditions and in all weather conditions except snow and ice. She reviewed the information at the request of Jerry Jung, Chair of the Michigan State Transportation Commission.

“While further analyses needs to be done, I felt the results were compelling enough to release it now,” said Jung. “The data paints a drastic and clear picture of the threat of digital billboards to traffic safety, and I believe it’s important to have this information as digital billboards continue to proliferate around the state.”

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*Scenic America is the only national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing the visual character of America's roadways, communities and countryside.*