Michigan Department of Transportation- Billboards

State & Location Transportation Committee

June 25, 2025

MDOT
Michigan Department of Transportation

History of Billboard Regulation

- October 1965 – Highway Beautification Act of 1965 passed by Congress – puts 10% of federal highway funds in jeopardy unless states maintain "**effective control**" of outdoor advertising
- FHWA promulgates regulations defining "effective control"
- March 1972 – Michigan Federal/State Agreement - Michigan agreed to maintain effective control to maintain funding
- March 31, 1972 – Michigan Highway Advertising Act of 1972 enacted
- Regulated signs – off-premises signs located on private property
- 46 states – billboard regulation
- 4 states – billboards prohibited (Maine, Vermont, Hawaii, Alaska)

Michigan Billboard Permits

- 11,700 Miles Regulated (M, US, Interstate, & NHS Routes (which includes some local roadways)
  - 2012 - 1,677 miles added to Michigan's NHS
- 14,435 Commercial Permits
  - 582 Digital Permits

*These numbers do not include on-premises signs

Interim Permits

- 2006 PA 447 introduced cap and trade system for billboards
- “Interim Permit” must be surrendered to construct a new billboard structure
- Interim permit obtained by removing existing legal billboard
- Interim permits have value and may be traded on the open market
- 1,305 active interim permits (ie, available to construct)

Billboard Sign Permit Requirements:

- 1,000 feet spacing along interstate and freeways, 500 feet along non-freeway
- 1,750 feet spacing for digital billboards facing the same direction of traffic
- Landowner consent (location cannot be within MDOT right of way)
- Zoning of commercial, industrial or business
- If the location is unzoned, it must be within 800 feet of an active business
- New billboards cannot be erected where there is mature vegetation within the right of way that MDOT intends to maintain

Sign Permit Applications

2024

154 - digital (conversions and new build)

86 – static (new build)

240 total applications

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90 Locations approved (pending construction)

82 permits issued (from 2023/24 approvals)

68 denied (majority were previous approvals where applicant failed to construct within 1 year)

As of May 2025

27 - digital (conversions and new build)

9 – static (new build)

38 total applications

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24 locations approved

8 permits issued (from 2024/25 approvals)

7 denied

Permit Application Fees

Application Fee Structure (MCL 252.307)

$100 – Static commercial permit application

$300 – Digital permit application (new build)

$200 – Digital conversion (static to digital)

***Application fee last increased in 1998 (digital fee added in 2014)**

2024

$23,100 digital (new build)

$15,400 digital conversion

$8,600 static (new build)

$47,100 total

As of May 2025

$2,400 digital (new build)

$4,500 digital conversion

$1,100 static (new build)

$8,000 total

Permit Renewal Fees

Renewal Fee Structure (MCL 252.307)

$50 – sign face up to and including 300 square feet

$80 – sign face of 301 square feet or more

$50 – late fee

$200 – digital permit fee

2024

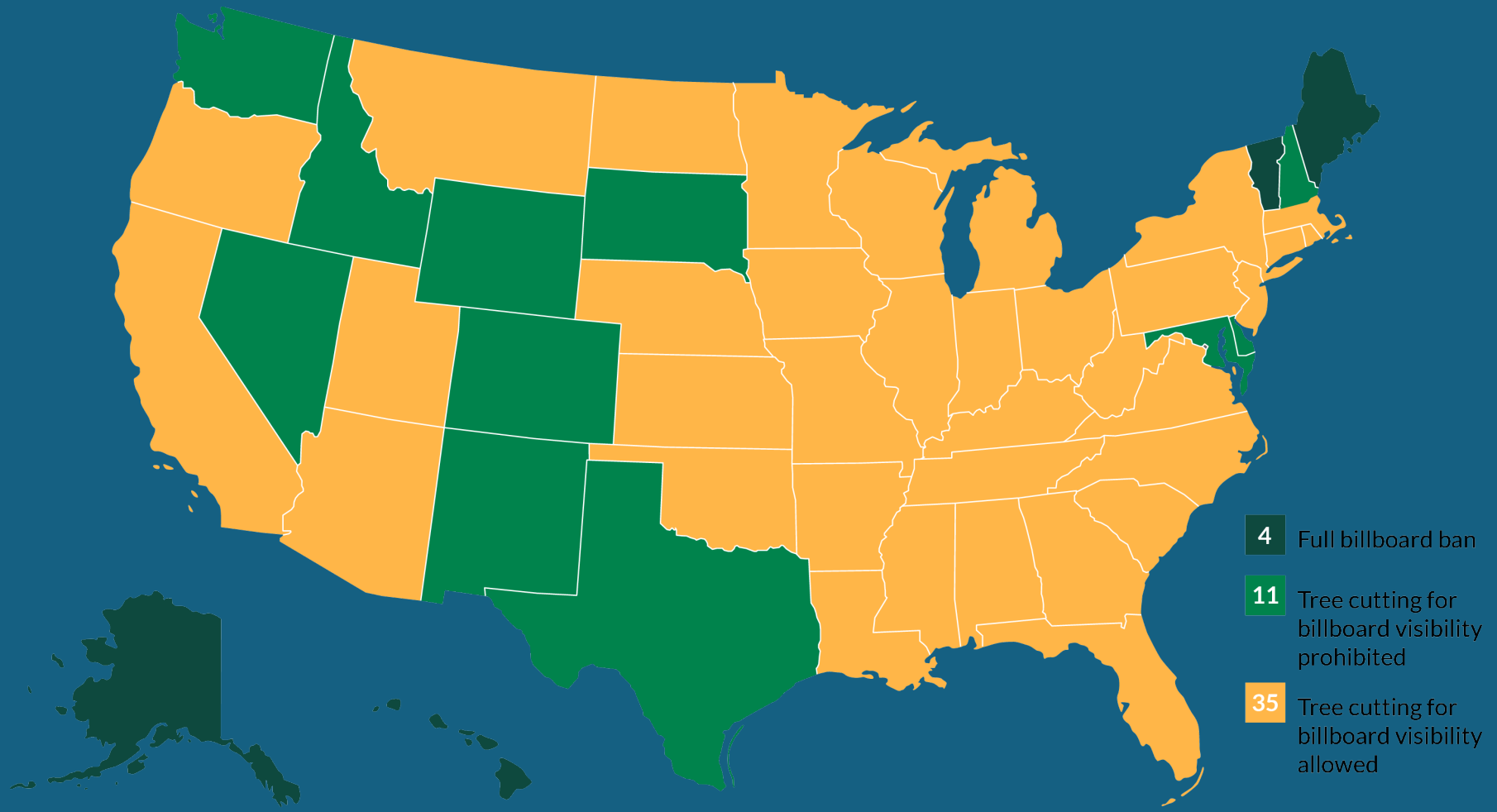
$1,057,425

As of May 2025

$750,900

*Fees last increased in 2007

Billboard Vegetation Management Permits



A permit is required for vegetation management in MDOT right of way

Vegetation Management Permits and Fees

January 1, 2024 through June 23, 2025

316 applications received

- 4 canceled
- 2 not approved
- 24 on hold
- 31 processing

255 permits issued

Fee Structure (MCL 252.311a)

$150 application fee

$500 permit fee

Plus, appraisal value of removed vegetation

2024

$147,595.07 – fees received

150 vegetation management permits issued

2025

$112,599.40 – fees received

105 vegetation management permits issued

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