

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
SENATOR DAVE CORTESE, CHAIR
2025-2026 Session

Committee Policy On: EXEMPTIONS TO THE OUTDOOR ADVERTISING ACT

Policy: The committee will not consider any measure which would exempt specific advertising display(s) adjacent to, or stretches of highways along, landscaped freeways in violation of the Outdoor Advertising Act (OAA), and will only consider measures affecting the OAA that reflect legislative changes to statewide policy positions.

Discussion: The state OAA regulates the placement of advertising displays adjacent to and within specified distances of highways that are part of the national system of interstate and defense highways and federal-aid highways. The act prohibits advertising from being placed adjacent to a section of a freeway that has been landscaped if the display is designed to be viewed primarily by persons traveling on the landscaped freeway.

Over the years, numerous bills have been introduced to exempt a specific sign or area from the prohibition against having an advertising display along a landscaped freeway. As a result, existing state law allows a single advertising structure exemption for each of several cities, including an exemption for advertising on "street furniture" in San Francisco, several billboards situated on the grounds of the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum complex, and structures within the Mid-City Recovery Redevelopment Project Area within Los Angeles.

The continued approval of specific exemptions for nonconforming and prohibited advertising displays adjacent to landscaped freeways threatens to undermine and render meaningless the provisions and intent of the Outdoor Advertising Act. Given that granting exemptions is not an effective way to establish or uphold policy and undermines the integrity of the OAA, this committee will not consider any measure that seeks to exempt specific signs or stretches of highway from the OAA. Give the changing nature of state policy, however, this committee may entertain a measure seeking to update, clarify, or resolve conflicts within the OAA or addressing shifts in statewide policy goals or positions.

Adopted by Senate Committee on Transportation on March 25, 2025.