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About Digital

ASTRAL MEDIA INC.

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## About Digital

Recently there have been a number of media articles and other dialogue surrounding Astral Out-of-Home's plan to introduce digital outdoor billboard advertising to Toronto. Unfortunately, some of the information conveyed to Torontonians was inaccurate or lacked some important details.

To ensure that interested parties have complete and full access to all the relevant information and background, Astral Out-of-Home has compiled and brought together all the relevant facts about digital outdoor advertising billboards and the company's plans to bring these signs to Toronto on this site.

### Astral Out-of-Home Corporate Background

Astral Out-of-Home is one of Canada's leading outdoor advertising companies. The company operates more than 7,500 faces across Canada with 4,700 faces located in the Greater Toronto Area. Astral outdoor properties in Toronto include Transit Shelters, Vertical and Horizontal Posters and Superboards.

### Digital Outdoor Billboard Network Background

In April 2009, Astral Media Outdoor launched Canada's first digital outdoor network in Montreal. Digital boards already operate in many American cities, London, and other centres in the UK. Ten displays are operating in Montreal.

Astral Media Outdoor is planning to bring digital outdoor billboards to Toronto in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations and is committed to follow the appropriate channels, deadlines and rules.

#### **Myth #1: Astral Out-of-Home's digital outdoor advertising billboards planned for Toronto are giant video screens.**

##### **Fact:**

The LED digital outdoor advertising billboards are not the same as the large Jumbotron style of video screen. Astral Out-of-Home's digital outdoor advertising billboards have two sizes, 14'x48' if located near expressways, 10'x34' if situated in city neighbourhoods. These two sizes are permitted in various parts of the city under the current bylaw.

The LED digital technology is specifically designed to provide a clear precise reproduction of still pictures or advertising artwork. They will not display live video or animation. Simply put, the messages do not move, jump or flash.

These digital outdoor billboards display 6 static advertising messages in 10 second intervals. The billboards can be instantly updated remotely, are constantly monitored and can be used by the City or the Police to communicate emergency messages to Torontonians including Amber Alerts.

#### **Myth #2: The digital outdoor advertising billboards will increase the so called "visual blight" of signs.**

##### **Fact:**

Astral Out-of-Home is proposing to convert seven existing paper and vinyl conventional billboards with digital outdoor advertising billboards; and to build three digital outdoor advertising billboards.

In addition, these digital outdoor billboards are state of the art in design, technology and construction, a significant visual improvement over the existing billboards they will replace.

#### **Myth #3: These new digital billboards will increase driver distraction.**

##### **Fact:**

A number of studies have been conducted where digital LED outdoor billboards have been in operation for a period of time. There is no evidence that digital outdoor billboards contribute to increased driver distraction.

The LED digital technology is specifically designed to provide a clear precise reproduction of still pictures or advertising artwork. They will not display live video or animation. Simply put, the messages do not move, jump or flash.

These new digital outdoor billboards display 6 static commercial messages in 10 second intervals. The signs can be updated remotely, are monitored and can be used by the City or the Police to communicate emergency messages including Amber alerts.

#### **Myth #4: Astral Out-of-Home is trying to get a clearance passed for digital outdoor advertising billboards ahead of the new sign by-law currently being developed is approved by the City of Toronto.**

##### **Fact:**

Astral Out-of-Home strongly supports the City of Toronto's desire to create a new harmonized sign by-law for Toronto. We agree that the current patchwork of by-laws are out of date and need to be revised to accurately reflect today's outdoor advertising industry. Astral Out-of-Home is working closely with OMAC and its members to reach a fair and workable solution for all sides.

Astral Out-of-Home initiated its project to convert seven existing conventional paper or vinyl billboards; and to build three digital outdoor advertising billboards, well in advance of the City's sign by-law review process.

Astral Media Outdoor is committed to bring digital outdoor billboards to Toronto in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

#### **Myth #5 : These new digital signs will contribute significantly to light pollution**

**Fact:**

The ambient light levels of the LED digital billboards are lower than found on standard conventional billboards. The LED lights on the digital billboards project forwards or horizontally rather than light vertically as found on conventional outdoor signs.

The light levels on the digital signs automatically adjust to match existing natural light conditions. For example, at night the lighting is dimmed to 10% of daytime levels.

The digital outdoor billboards are not large video screens like a Jumbotron. Astral Media Outdoor's billboards are built in two sizes, 14'x48' if they are located near expressways or 10'x34' if situated in City neighbourhoods. These two standards meet the sizes permitted in Toronto.

**Myth #6: Astral Out-of-Home intends to replace all its billboards with the new digital outdoor billboards.**

**Fact:**

Digital outdoor billboard technology is very expensive and not economically viable for all of Astral Out-of-Home's billboard locations. These digital outdoor billboards will be placed strategically in key high traffic volume locations across Toronto.

Astral Out-of-Home is proposing to convert seven existing paper and vinyl conventional billboards with digital outdoor advertising billboards; and to build three digital outdoor advertising billboards.

**Myth #7: There is no benefit to the City of Toronto from approving these new signs?**

**Fact:**

The City of Toronto is Astral Media Outdoor's biggest landlord. If the City approves Astral Out-of-Home's project and these digital outdoor billboards are in place, Astral Out-of-Home will pay more monies to the City.

The City of Toronto is one of the largest users of outdoor space in Toronto. Astral Out-of-Home has committed to provide hundreds of public service messages daily to the City and Toronto Police Service at no charge to communicate with Torontonians on the new digital signs. There are no restrictions on the number of AMBER Alert messages.

**Myth #8: The LED digital outdoor billboards are environmentally unfriendly.**

**Fact:**

These digital advertising billboards are the most environmentally friendly display formats available today. With LED programmable digital technology, there is no use of ink, glues, paper or vinyl.

Digital LED billboards will save 80,640 square feet of vinyl being produced each year. This translates into a savings of 5,228 megajoules of energy and a reduction of 2.1 metric tonnes of CO2 emissions required in vinyl production.

The digital advertising displayed on the LED digital outdoor billboards is managed electronically and remotely. As a result there is no need for sign installation or ongoing on-site maintenance. This significantly reduces greenhouse gas emissions linked to transportation. Servicing the current conventional paper or vinyl billboards produces 2.34 metric tonnes per year of greenhouse gas emissions. The LED digital outdoor billboards will produce only 0.24 metric tonnes per year.

Some digital outdoor billboards will consume more electricity than the traditional billboards they replace, but others will consume less.

Furthermore, Astral Out-of-Home has entered into an agreement with Bullfrog Power to provide the electricity required to run the digital billboards. The LED lighting is energy efficient and the energy provided by Bullfrog used to power the LED digital panels is completely renewable (solar, wind and hydro).

In addition, the light levels on the LED digital billboards, adjust automatically to match light conditions. For example, at night the LED lighting is dims to 10% of capacity, to help ensure the appropriate amount of electricity is used.

**Myth #9: Astral Out-of-Home does not support the City's new outdoor advertising by-law.**

**Fact:**

Astral Out-of-Home fully supports the City's new outdoor advertising by-law. Astral Media Outdoor is working with OMAC, our industry association, and the City to develop a new sign by-law that can regulate and help promote a healthy outdoor advertising industry in Toronto that respects and enhances the unique characteristics and culture of Toronto's diverse neighbourhoods. Astral Out-of-Home is participating on a sub-committee on how to deal with illegal signs.