

IMAGINE A MORE

# Scenic Texas

## Priorities

For 2021 State Legislative Session

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## DARK SKIES

Four out of five children will grow up never seeing the Milky Way because of light pollution, according to the Hill Country Alliance. Unnecessary nighttime lighting disproportionately impacts specific regions of the state, especially in the Hill Country. Stargazing and celestial events have become important tourist attractions. This region attracted almost 75,000 visitors in 2019, accounting for \$9.8 billion in annual direct travel spending, according to the Office of the Governor.

Current efforts include resolutions and ordinances supporting dark sky regulations in fourteen Hill Country counties, seven counties surrounding the McDonald Observatory in West Texas, and lighting around San Antonio military bases.

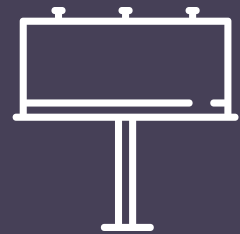
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## BILLBOARD STANDARDS

Scenic Texas pushed back during the 2019 legislative session when the billboard industry sought to double the height of future billboards, from the current cap of 42.5 feet to 85 feet, the height of a nine-story building. Ultimately, the stakeholders compromised to limit the height of future billboards to 60 feet.

Scenic Texas continues to monitor the regulation of billboards, including the rule-making process of SB 357. Scenic Texas also supports increased TxDOT funding to inventory existing billboards on its roads.



## GREEN RIBBON PROGRAM

Planting trees and shrubs and native landscaping along Rights-of-Way are part of TxDOT's Green Ribbon Program. Examples of this include the more than 40,000 plants installed along US 75 in Dallas and more than 1 M trees planted in Houston with Green Ribbon funding.

In addition to enhancing the visual landscape, these projects help to mitigate the effects of air pollution. The innovative Green Ribbon Program focuses on both environmental and aesthetic concerns with the goal of creating a visually pleasing experience for the public.



## SCENIC HIGHWAYS

Portions of 34 Texas highways have been formally designated as protected highways by the state legislature since 2001 when Scenic Texas began its advocacy work in this area. New billboards are prohibited on these designated roadways.

Scenic Texas continues to advocate for legislation to designate more Texas roads as Scenic Highways.



## LOCAL CONTROL

Protecting the authority of local governments to make decisions affecting their visual environments is a key issue for Scenic Texas. Building and tree ordinances, as well as issues related to open spaces, billboards and lighting are best governed locally.

Every Texas city has its own visual character. A legislative one-size-fits-all strategy discourages what makes each community unique. The almost 100 Texas cities and partners designated through the Scenic City Certification Program are committed to preventing the State from taking over local jurisdiction.