

# 5.3

**SIGN TYPES  
NOT  
INCORPORATED  
INTO THE  
SAMOAC**

## 5.3 Sign Types not Incorporated into the SAMOAC

Certain sign types could not be included in the SAMOAC due to the following reasons:

- The SAMOAC serves as a manual for best practice in order to encourage a high standard of outdoor advertising which will actually enhance the perceptual environment and contribute to road safety.
- The precautionary principle is applied with regard to the SAMOAC. This is a well known environmental principle which states that if an activity raises threats of harm to human safety or health or to the environment, precautionary measures and protective action should be taken even if such threats cannot be based upon scientific consensus. In this context the proponent of an activity, rather than the public or controlling authority, should bear the burden of sufficient proof.

The following are some of the better-known sign types left out of the SAMOAC:

- Commercial advertising on street poles
- Commercial signs at educational facilities
- Estate agent's directional signs to show houses
- Street name advertisements
- Suburban adds
- Beam advertising and advertising using similar sources of illumination
- Painted stone signs on hillsides

Any controlling authority who wishes to allow any sign type which has not been included in SAMOAC will have to adopt their own conditions for such sign types.

Notice should also be taken that sign types such as flags and banners and product replicas have now been incorporated into various other sign types.

### 5.3.1 Commercial Advertising on Street Poles

#### Road Safety

Commercial advertising on lampposts is currently one of the most problematic sign types as far as road safety is concerned. Originally street pole advertising was limited in the 1998 edition of SAMOAC to posters for charitable purposes and election posters. However, in order to generate an extra income, many local authorities started allowing permanent purpose-made receptacles against street poles for displaying commercial messages. This has now become a common practice with a huge increase in the number of street pole posters. These adverts are normally displayed on street poles along urban roads carrying high-speed /high-volume traffic in order to obtain optimum exposure of advertising messages. A common characteristic of posters messages is their illegibility due to too lengthy written messages printed in too small text. As can be expected high-volume/ high-speed traffic together with a huge number of illegible posters can only lead to the deterioration of traffic safety conditions.

Currently street pole advertisements can be seen as the main contributor to advertising clutter and information overload within road reserves. These advertisements are even displayed within the restricted areas at street corners where no advertising should be allowed with the exception of site boundary signage under exceptional circumstances (See General Conditions and Principles 5.1.5 (b) and 5.1.5(c)(v)). Even outside such restricted areas, road signs tend to be in direct competition with street pole posters which are displayed too close to such road signs in many instances.

Permanent purpose-made receptacles attached illegally to lamp poles have become another problematic issue. Due to the large number of receptacles involved in larger municipalities and a general lack in manpower it is not always possible to identify and remove illegal receptacles.

Legal lamp pole posters tend, by their mere presence, to attract and generate a large number of illegal posters printed on *Correx Board* and which are attached to a variety of structures including traffic signs and signals.

#### The Perceptual Environment

Street pole advertisements have a negative impact on the visual environment due to the large number of posters involved and the **rectangular or square format** of the receptacles which clashes with the prominent vertical lines of the lamp poles.

#### Other Implications

It cannot be expected from interested and affected parties such as estate agents not to display signs such as show house pointer boards inside road reserves while lamp pole advertisements are allowed which poses an even greater traffic safety hazard.

If the principle of restricting advertising signs within road reserves to the absolute minimum (General Conditions & Principles par. 5.1.5(a)), is to be applied consistently the following lamp pole posters can also not be allowed:

- **Municipal notices** which pose the same problem of illegible messages (too much information on too small a space) and even to a larger extent than most other posters. In certain cases municipalities do not even adhere to their own advertising by-laws by displaying municipal notices against traffic signs and signals. Controlling authorities should actually **set an example** to other interested and affected parties by not displaying notices on lamp poles.
- **Newspaper posters:** Headline posters are actually part of a limited number of legible posters, but unfortunately the newspaper people tend to be the main culprits when it comes to posters displayed within restricted areas at street corners. Newspaper companies are provided with excellent advertising opportunities at a relatively low fee without putting

anything worthwhile back into local communities except for providing employment to a number of newsvendors at street corners – which should actually not be allowed due to safety and security reasons. Newspaper poster should be limited to points of sale such as newsstands and convenience stores. Instead of employing newsvendors at street corners newspaper companies should rather consider providing previously disadvantaged persons with more decent empowerment opportunities by providing them with newsstands or newspaper trolleys at localities such as shopping centre parking areas, filling stations, city centres or transportation nodes (See images below).

- **Posters for charitable purposes:** These posters are notorious for their illegibility. Other affordable opportunities should be provided for advertising community and charitable events such as information boards at shopping centres, filling stations and outdoor information nodes.

### What is allowed?

Election posters and banners for events of national or international importance are the only signs which are now allowed on lamp poles in terms of SAMOAC (See *Class 7(f) ~ Lamppost Advertising*). Both elections and events of national and international importance do not happen that often while both election posters and event banners contain a limited amount of information which is in most cases quite legible. Banners have an elongated form which harmonises with the lines of the lamp poles and enhances the visual environment.

### A New Approach and Paradigm Shift

The current practice of displaying information on lamp poles should be replaced by a practice of displaying information at central points such as filling stations, community facilities such as libraries and at shopping centres. This implies a paradigm shift, but with a coordinated effort from the various parties involved the accomplishment of such an approach should not be a problem.



**Collapsible newspaper-stand with trolley**



**Newspaper trolley**

## 5.3.2 Commercial Signs at Educational Facilities

### Perceptual Impact

Presently most schools in South Africa are going through difficult economic times. Outdoor advertising on school sites are often seen as a way to augment school fees. This leads to a proliferation of advertisements on school sites which not only impacts aesthetically on the school site but also on surrounding neighbourhoods (School sites and most residential areas are normally classified as areas of maximum control according to section 4.4 of SAMOAC). In the process schools and similar institutions with a prestigious image and educational status are often reduced to mere places of consumerism and commercialism. Furthermore, only a limited number of schools, situated along arteries and streets with higher traffic volumes, will actually benefit in any meaningful way from displaying advertisements. Even then massive billboards and/or masses of smaller advertisements are needed to generate any significant income.

### Traffic Safety

Commercial advertisements on school sites may also have traffic safety implications. In many cases such outdoor advertising messages are not all that legible from the street or may contain too much information to read will driving past. The proliferation of signs on school sites contributes to information overload in the broader environment or may even succeed in creating such a situation on their own without a contribution from other signs. Masses of site boundary signage cause advertising clutter in the immediate road environment. All these factors may lead to the distraction of the attention of passing motorists.

### Problems Foreseen

The above-mentioned problems had been foreseen and therefore no provision was made for commercial signs in the 1998-edition of SAMOAC. Since 1998 the situation has only worsened.

### Creating a Precedent

Allowing commercial advertising on school sites may create a precedent in terms of which other institutions such as churches, which may also experience difficult economic times, and even commercial enterprises, may insist on displaying similar third party signage in order to augment their income. Rejection of such requests may be interpreted as discrimination against other parties and it can be expected that the display of such signs will become more and more inclusive until each and every type of business will claim the right to display these signs.



Above: School site billboards during road works along a section of the N1 which normally is a high accident prone area. Also in direct competition with road sign gantry.

Left: Masses of site boundary signage.

### 5.3.3 Estate Agent's Directional Signs to Show Houses

A 'show house' can be defined as a house which is on the market and which is presented or 'opened up' to prospective buyers at specific periods over a weekend. Pointer boards or directional signs to such houses, which are driven into the ground on sidewalks, are a typical South African suburban phenomenon. It is allowed in almost no other country.

Although small in size this sign type creates a number of problems:

#### Damage to Underground Services

Shallow underground services such as street light cables, traffic signal power lines and synchronization cables and irrigation lines are being damaged on an unacceptable scale by the metal stakes of these signs. Even deeper services such as sewer lines and water pipes are being damaged from time to time. In the case of damage to street light cables, irrigation lines and traffic signal synchronization cables, the person responsible for the pointer board won't even be aware of the damage inflicted as the relevant electricity feed is switched off during the day, the relevant irrigation is often not in use at that time and the damage to the traffic signal synchronization-cable only becomes apparent when motorists start complaining about unexpected traffic delay experienced several days later.

In order to try to prevent damage to underground services some municipalities requires that no stakes to which such signs are affixed may be driven more than 120 mm into the ground. However, depending on soil and wind conditions, such stakes often need to be driven more than 120mm into the ground to prevent it from being blown over by strong winds. Signs which are blown over by the wind may cause injuries to pedestrians and damage to passing vehicles, especially when a motorist swerves to avoid a sign and crashes into a roadside obstruction or another vehicle. Several methods have been tested by advertisers over the years to secure advertisements without driving supports into the sidewalk. No failsafe alternative had yet been found. It will also be very difficult to enforce any condition on minimum stake depth and compliance of this condition will depend on the integrity of the individual agent who actually pegs or stakes a pointer board into the ground.

If pointer boards are to be allowed on the sidewalk the only way to solve this problem is not to allow pegged or staked boards on any part of the sidewalk where services might be damaged. This will mean that such boards will have to be limited to a position directly next to the road reserve boundary or boundary fences of even and parallel to such boundaries or fences. Such a position will result in a very low visibility of pointer boards. Another option might be to attach such pointer boards flat onto boundary fences which will mean that in addition to low visibility permission to attach these boards will also have to be obtained from the owners of the relevant premises. It seems that in order to solve the problem of possible damages to underground services pointer boards may be rendered practically ineffective in the process.

#### Pedestrian Safety

Staked signs on sidewalks can create serious safety risks to pedestrians and joggers. This is in particular a problem at nighttime where street lighting does not illuminate the sidewalk adequately and where dark colours are used on the sign face or where joggers are temporarily blinded by the headlights of oncoming traffic. A pedestrian who is not concentrating on the sidewalk directly in front of him/her at the very moment when the sign is encountered may walk into/fall over the sign. The stakes/pegs used to anchor such a sign are in itself lethal objects and can penetrate the body and essential organs. Cyclists traveling on the sidewalk are also exposed to this risk, while cyclists negotiating a turn on the sidewalk are focusing on other traffic and potential conflict and may not see such signs before crashing into it.

Again the only solution would be to limited staked signs to a position directly next to and parallel to boundary fences or to attach direction signs flat onto boundary fences in order to keep such signs out of the way of pedestrians, joggers and cyclists.

## Traffic Safety

Show house direction signs may impact on traffic safety in various ways:

- The attention of drivers may be distracted while observing the information on pointer boards instead of focusing on traffic conditions and traffic signs and signals – especially at intersections where driver attention becomes critical. This problem must be seen against the problem of the lack of conspicuousness of information presented on small pointer boards.
- Pointer boards may even obstruct the view of traffic signs, especially smaller signs closer to the ground such as signs indicating traffic humps. Pointer boards may also obstruct the view of accesses to private property and enterprises.
- Masses of pointer boards may also contribute to the problem of information overload where an excess of information creates a situation where the human mind shuts down and blocks out 'inappropriate' information which may include traffic signs and signals.

Various measures may be taken to alleviate the above-mentioned problems such as limiting pointer boards to roads with a speed limit of 60 kilometres an hour or less and not allowing such boards in restricted areas at street corners as indicated on Fig.8 of SAMOAC. However, such measures might not be effective enough in terms of traffic safety while on the other hand it might also render these pointer boards ineffective.

## Creating a Precedent

Allowing show house direction signs may create a precedent in terms of which other industries may also insist on the display of direction signs. Rejection of such requests may be interpreted as discrimination against such industries and it can be expected that the display of such directional signs will become more and more inclusive until each and every type of business will claim the right to display such signs.

By their mere presence show house directional signs also tend to attract a variety of illegal signs/ advertisements of the same nature which contribute to the problem of staked sign proliferation on sidewalks.

## Control

Due to the number of pointer boards involved it becomes an almost impossible task to regulate these boards. Most municipalities who do allow pointer boards have limited the number of boards that may be displayed per estate agent, while the period of display is limited to weekends. This has complicated the regulatory process since the multi-directional trail of each and every estate agent's pointer boards has to be literally followed for each and every show house in order to monitor the number of boards permitted effectively. This is a very time-consuming process and most municipalities simply do not have the manpower for undertaking such a task and it cannot be expected from local taxpayers to provide additional funds for appointing more officials for this purpose. One must also take into consideration that in most cases officials responsible for controlling outdoor advertisements and signs are not on duty over weekends when pointer boards are being displayed, which implies a need for overtime compensation or the appointment of external monitors.

In order to solve this problem some municipalities have tried to involve the Institute of Estate Agents of South Africa (IEASA) in controlling all estate agent boards including pointer boards. However, this has also not fully solved the problem either. Whether the monitoring of pointer boards is done by IEASA or a controlling authority it still remains an immense task while the element of competition in terms of the dominance of pointer boards cannot be eliminated – there will always be estate agents who do not stick to the conditions regarding size, format and number of pointer boards while also using pointer boards for advertising an agency instead of simply fulfilling a directional function. Then there are also rogue agents who do not belong to IEASA and do not adhere to any conditions at all.



### 5.3.4 Street Name Advertisements

Although this sign type was included in the 1998-edition of SAMOAC it was not re-allowed in the updated version of SAMOAC for the simple reason that it is placed within restricted areas at street corners and is therefore in direct competition with traffic signals. Although the colours red, amber and green were not supposed to be displayed on such signs in the past this condition was never enforced by controlling authorities. Advertising messages on street name advertisements are not always that legible while contact information are often provided which make this sign type even more distracting.

Seen in the light of the above mentioned problems it is clear that these signs may have a much larger traffic safety impact than many other sign types that may be allowed inside road reserves.

Commercial advertisements were combined with street names in the past for the sole benefit of receiving street name panels free of charge. However, if viable advertising packages are made available to the outdoor advertising industry a variety of traffic related streetscape elements, including sufficient street name signs without advertising panels, can be supplied by the media owner acquiring the tender in exchange for the advertising rights made available.

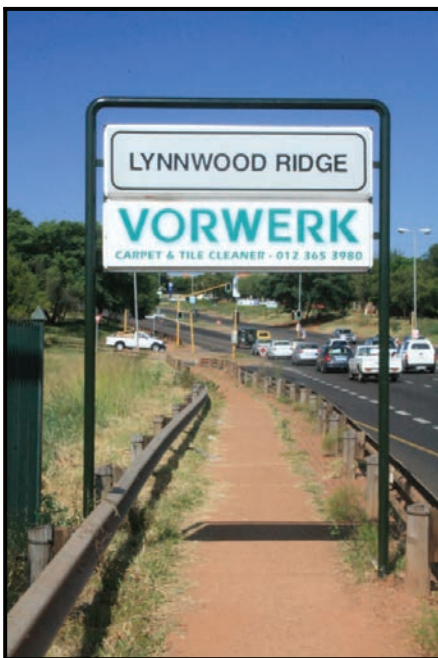




### 5.3.5 Suburban Adverts

These adverts which are combined with suburban name signs are illegible in most cases, contain contact information and are often placed in unsafe locations such as on the bends of roads or within the restricted areas at street corners which impairs traffic safety. If the principle of minimising advertising signs inside road reserves is to be applied and controlling authorities want to set an example in this regard this sign type cannot be allowed.

Commercial advertisements were combined with street names in the past for the sole benefit of receiving suburban name panels free of charge. However, if viable advertising packages are made available to the outdoor advertising industry a variety of traffic related streetscape elements, including sufficient suburban name signs without advertising panels, can be supplied by the media owner acquiring the tender in exchange for the advertising rights made available.



### 5.3.6 Beam Advertising and Advertising Using Similar Sources of Illumination

#### The Nature of Beam Advertising

This sign type consists of advertisements projected or beamed onto a variety of surfaces or into the sky by means of high intensity light sources such as laser light or searchlights. It may also include projected light sources of lesser intensity such as full motion digital video and large format film and slide projections.

Laser projections may consist of static script and images/logos (gobos) or fully-animated commercials with moving, spinning gobos. Laser beams, both horizontal and vertical, static or moving, can also be used to attract attention to the actual message.

The effect of beam advertising may be optimised by blending the various options in this class into a light 'show' – for instance motion picture mediums, such as film and digital video, may be combined with laser beams, static and animated laser graphics and sound. Buildings lit up by colourful architectural lighting may even serve as projection surface.

Beamed advertisements may be projected from a fixed unit remotely controlled from a central computer to whom a number of similar projection units may be networked in order to allow for the joined control and monitoring of all these projection units. Apart from such more permanent projection units, temporary stationary installations may also be an option as well as mobile units in

the form of open vans from which advertisements are projected. Apart from pre-entered text and graphics via computer software control, freehand graphics may also be created on the spot while laser displays are underway.

### The Impact of Beam Advertising

This sign class may give rise to serious light pollution which may interfere with people's enjoyment of the night skies and with astronomical observations while it may also influence traffic safety, human health and the ecology.

Laser advertising can be seen as a high-impact promotion medium. It can be projected over long distances onto almost any surface of almost any size. Several high-rise buildings at a time, existing billboards (at night time retractable projection screens are automatically unrolled in front of fixed billboard contents) or even mountains and the clouds overhead may be used for this purpose. Structures of cultural importance, such as the Sydney Opera House and the great pyramids of Giza, that were previously inaccessible to outdoor advertising can now be painted with laser messages. In many cases such advertisements can be seen from miles away.

As part of Cape Town's Millennium Celebrations a clock was projected onto Table Mountain ticking off the minutes to the new millennium on the eve of 31 December 1999. This image could be seen from 2,5 kilometres away. During December 2009 an even more impressive, but illegal advertisement from the Sun newspaper was beamed onto Table Mountain, which has now become a World Heritage site and National Park.

Horizontal and especially vertical laser beams, which are used for drawing attention to laser advertising messages, are visible from miles away and will definitely have a major impact on the aesthetic environment while also contributing to light pollution. Such laser beams may even be used to attract attention to or 'advertise' localities such as towns and cities. This is the case with the proposed *Southampton Laser Gateway* in the UK which will consist of four green laser beams projected into the night skies in order to create a monumental landmark for everyone approaching the city by sea, air, road or rail. These laser beams will be visible from distances of up to 25 km, will contribute to light pollution and will have a definite impact on Southampton's hinterland which includes the New Forest National Park. In contrast to laser shows or events which normally only last one or two nights projects such as *Southampton Laser Gateway* must be seen as permanent features and will therefore result in permanent impacts which may actually destroy the tranquillity and solitude of nearby natural areas.

By integrating sound into a beam advertising mix this sign class may also contribute to sound pollution.

Although beamed advertisements do have an enormous potential for impacting on the environment it can also be seen as a potential medium for artistic expression. By projecting images onto smoke or water screens amazing illusions may be created of such images floating through the air. Water screens are created artificially as canvasses for a variety of projected media such as laser graphics and digital video projections. Such screens may vary in size from 5 to 30 metre in height and 10m to 60 m in width. In the same way as a firework display can be seen as attractive, open air laser shows which may include promotions and advertisements may also be seen as attractive. However, one must differentiate between laser shows associated with specific events lasting only one or two nights and beam advertising displayed over prolonged periods.

From an outdoor advertising point of view laser and other beamed advertising messages have an advantage over fixed advertising displays since it can be easily changed by simply changing the projected image instead of having to replace an advertisement by scaling a billboard structure. This medium may therefore become very popular in the future.

## Conclusion

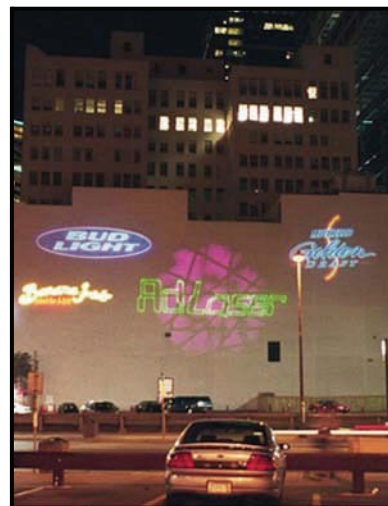
Due to its negative impact on traffic safety and the environment beam advertising cannot be included in SAMOAC. Beam advertising and laser shows should only be considered as part of specific events of limited duration and which are of national or international importance.



Laser text and images (above & right) with projected full-motion video (above right) and full laser show during the African Cup of Nations (below).

<http://www.laseronics-me.com>

<http://www.cltterrain.com>



Illegal beam advertising on Table Mountain



Sydney Opera House - Structures of cultural importance that were previously inaccessible to outdoor advertising can now be painted with laser messages. Notice the laser beams that direct the eye towards the image.



Artistic expression – Creating amazing illusions of figures floating through the air by projecting images onto water screens. Notice the vertical laser beams that attract attention to the figures in the central image.

<http://www.laseronics-me.com>



Outdoor art projected onto screens (top). Laser image beamed onto a building (centre). Laser beams and projected advertising messages on a large scale (bottom)

**5.3.7  
Stone  
Hillsides**

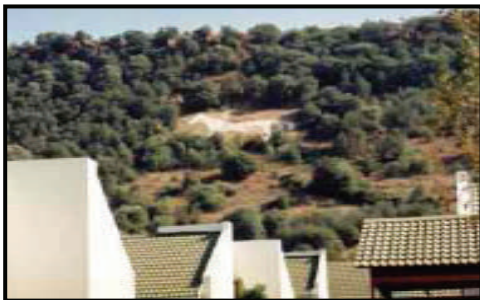
<http://www.laseronics-me.com>

**Painted  
Signs on**

These signs were used in times past for indicating the location of institutions, towns and similar

places. Many of these painted stone signs on hillsides have a cultural and historical value such as Bloemfontein's famous White Horse which was laid out on the eastern slope of Naval Hill by the men from the Wiltshire Remount Depot during the Anglo-Boer War. In such cases these painted stone signs may contribute to the local sense of place.

However, this signs type has all the potential of seriously impacting on rural landscapes and on topographical features in urban landscapes and can therefore not be included in the revised SAMOAC.



The White Horse on the eastern slope of Naval Hill, Bloemfontein, Free State Province (Top image from Google Earth).



Painted stone signs should not be used for commercial purposes