April 7, 2016 – Introduced by Representative STUCK. Referred to Committee on Rules.

AN ACT to repeal 59.70 (22), 60.23 (29), 84.30 (4) (bm) and 84.305; to renumber and amend 84.30 (10m); to amend 84.30 (1), 84.30 (2) (a), 84.30 (2) (j), 84.30 (3) (intro.), 84.30 (4) (intro.), 84.30 (4) (bm), 84.30 (10) (a), 84.30 (14), 227.43 (1) (bg) and 289.33 (3) (d); to repeal and recreate 84.30 (10m) (title); and to create 20.395 (9) (aq), 20.932, 41.17 (4) (dm), 66.0430, 84.30 (2) (dg), 84.30 (2) (im), 84.30 (2) (jm), 84.30 (3) (gm), 84.30 (4m), 84.30 (9g), 84.30 (9r), 84.30 (10m) (b), 84.30 (10s) and 84.30 (14) (c) of the statutes; relating to: outdoor advertising signs, granting rule-making authority, and making an appropriation.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill alters numerous provisions relating to the regulation of outdoor advertising signs along highways.

The federal Highway Beautification Act requires states to restrict advertising along interstate and federal-aid primary (primary) highways, and current state law incorporates these requirements. Current law prohibits, with certain exceptions,
the erection or maintenance of outdoor advertising signs within 660 feet of, or beyond 660 feet but visible (and erected for the purpose of being visible) from, the main-traveled way of an interstate or primary highway. The exceptions to this prohibition include, with some restrictions:

1. Directional and other official signs, including signs relating to natural wonders and scenic and historical attractions.
2. Landmark signs.
3. Signs advertising the sale or lease of property on which the signs are located.
4. On-premises signs, which are signs advertising activities conducted on the property where the signs are located.
5. Signs located beyond 660 feet of the highway in urban areas.
6. Signs located within 660 feet of the highway in areas zoned for business, industrial, or commercial activities, or in unzoned areas used for commercial or industrial activities, that were in existence on March 18, 1972.
7. Signs located within 660 feet of the highway in areas zoned for business, industrial, or commercial activities, or in unzoned areas used for commercial or industrial activities, that were erected after March 18, 1972. These signs must comply with certain size, lighting, and spacing requirements (off-premises business area signs). If, however, a county or local zoning authority has made a determination of customary use regarding size, lighting, and spacing, that determination may be accepted in lieu of the statutory requirements.
8. Certain signs erected on farm buildings.

This bill freezes, as of the effective date of the bill, the application of the exception to off-premises business area signs, thereby prohibiting the erection of signs under that exception after the bill’s effective date. Signs erected under this exception prior to the bill’s effective date may continue to be maintained and to vary their advertising and informative displays.

This bill extends the provisions governing outdoor advertising signs along interstate and federal-aid primary highways to all state trunk highways and scenic byways.

Under this bill, a determination of customary use by a county or local zoning authority does not affect the applicability of statutory size, lighting, or spacing requirements.

Under current law, the Department of Transportation (DOT) generally may remove signs that do not conform to applicable requirements but, for each sign removed, must pay just compensation to the owner of the sign and to the owner of the land on which the sign is located. For on-property signs, if the on-property sign was lawful when it was erected but later does not comply with the applicable requirements for on-property signs, DOT must declare the sign to be nonconforming but may not remove the sign unless additional criteria are met. These signs are not subject to removal for changing the advertising message on the sign or performing customary maintenance on the sign, but are subject to removal, without compensation, if the sign is enlarged, replaced, or relocated or if additional signs are erected.
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Under this bill, “customary maintenance” is defined to mean any of the following and similar activities when performed to maintain a sign in substantially the same form as when the sign became non-conforming: preparing surfaces for painting; repairing or replacing fasteners such as nails, screws, or bolts; replacing lighting components and associated fixtures; or fastening broken pieces of a sign back together with glue or fasteners. Customary maintenance specifically does not include using different materials for any replacement or adding any structural elements such as posts, poles, braces or guy wires, crossbeams, or sign faces. Also under this bill, the owner of a nonconforming on-property sign must maintain a record of all work performed on the sign, including a photograph of each item of work performed, and provide a report to DOT of the work performed.

Under current law, off-premises business area signs may not contain flashing, intermittent, or moving lights, except:
1. Those signs giving public service information.
2. Certain signs that contain multiple or variable messages, including messages on louvers that are rotated and messages formed solely by use of lights or other electronic or digital displays.

Under this bill, the exception from the prohibition of flashing, intermittent, or moving lights for certain signs that contain multiple or variable messages is eliminated.

Under this bill, DOT must promulgate rules establishing size, height, setback, brightness, and hours of operation standards for signs that are illuminated. Signs may be illuminated only if the owner of the sign has received a permit from DOT, which is issued if the sign complies with DOT illumination rules.

This bill requires DOT to conduct biennial surveys of signs. A survey must include all of the following for each sign:
1. A photograph of each side.
2. Approximate measurement of the length and height.
3. An assessment of the sign’s structural type.
4. Approximate measurement of the distance from each sign to the center line of the adjacent highway and to the nearest sign.

Under this bill, DOT must maintain a database of information related to signs. The database must include the information from DOT sign surveys and all of the following information for each sign:
1. The name and address of the owner.
2. The name and address of the installer.
3. The name and address of the owner of the parcel on which the sign is located.
4. The name and address of any occupant of the parcel on which the sign is located.
5. Zoning and land use status of the parcel on which the sign is located.
6. If commercial or industrial activity occurs on the parcel on which the sign is located, a description of the activity.
7. Any other information required by DOT.
Also under this bill, an owner of a sign must provide any information required to be included in the database to DOT and must update the information whenever the information in the database is no longer accurate.

Under current law, no person may erect or maintain an outdoor advertising sign visible from the main-traveled way of an interstate or federal-aid highway unless he or she possesses a license issued by DOT, the sign complies with applicable regulations, and, if DOT has promulgated a rule requiring payment of an annual permit fee for the sign, the person has paid the annual permit fee.

Under this bill, DOT must establish a license fee and an annual permit fee. DOT is required to set the fees so as to recover its approximate costs of regulating outdoor advertising signs.

Under current law, DOT is responsible for maintenance of the highway right-of-way on highways that, for maintenance purposes, are under its jurisdiction, which are generally state trunk highways (including interstate highways) but do not include connecting highways. DOT must provide for the care and protection of trees and other roadside vegetation. DOT must also cut, trim, or remove, or allow others to cut, trim, or remove, trees and other vegetation in order to provide safety to highway users. Current law generally prohibits a person from cutting, trimming, removing, or planting a tree or other vegetation within the right-of-way of a state trunk highway without DOT's consent.

Currently, DOT administers a permit system for the maintenance and removal by sign owners of vegetation obstructing the view of signs along state trunk highways, including interstate highways. DOT is required to issue permits to sign owners for the trimming or removal of vegetation in the highway right-of-way if, within a distance of 500 continuous feet along the highway, the vegetation obstructs motorists' view of the face of a sign. A permit authorizes the sign owner, or a third-party contractor employed by the sign owner, to trim or remove obstructing vegetation to the extent necessary to eliminate the obstruction and restore an unobstructed view of the sign for the 500 continuous feet along the highway. Each permit must require a sign owner that removes certain planted vegetation to plant comparable replacement vegetation or compensate DOT for the removed vegetation.

This bill eliminates the permit system for the maintenance and removal by sign owners of vegetation obstructing the view of signs along state trunk highways.

Under current law, towns and counties are authorized to regulate the maintenance and construction of billboards and other similar structures on premises abutting on certain highways in the town or county so as to promote the safety of public travel on the highways.

Under this bill, a city, village, town, or county may enact an ordinance that regulates the construction and maintenance of billboards and other similar structures on premises abutting on highways that are maintained by the city, village, town, or county. If enacted, such an ordinance must promote aesthetic values and public safety on the highways.

This bill prohibits any office, department, or independent agency in the executive branch, the legislature, or the courts from purchasing, leasing, accepting, or using billboard space on nonconforming signs.
Under current law, the Department of Tourism may award joint effort marketing funds to nonprofit organizations, including American Indian tribes or bands, for projects designed to promote attractions and facilities in this state. While an applicant for joint effort marketing funds must specify the advertising media to be used in a project funded by the funds, there is no restriction on the kinds of media that may be used. This bill prohibits the use of joint effort marketing funds for advertising on nonconforming signs.

For further information see the state and local fiscal estimate, which will be printed as an appendix to this bill.

The people of the state of Wisconsin, represented in senate and assembly, do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. 20.395 (9) (aq) of the statutes is created to read:

20.395 (9) (aq) Outdoor advertising regulation. All moneys received under s. 84.30 (10) (a) and (10m) (a), for the regulation of outdoor advertising along highways.

SECTION 2. 20.932 of the statutes is created to read:

20.932 Prohibition on use of certain signs. A state agency may not purchase, lease, accept, or use space on a sign that does not conform to the requirements under s. 84.30. If a state agency owns space on a sign that does not conform to the requirements under s. 84.30 on the effective date of this section .... [LRB inserts date], the state agency shall sell the space as soon as practically possible. If a state agency leases space on a sign that does not conform to the requirements under s. 84.30 on the effective date of this section .... [LRB inserts date], the state agency may not renew the lease.

SECTION 3. 41.17 (4) (dm) of the statutes is created to read:

41.17 (4) (dm) No funds may be used for advertising on a sign that does not conform to the requirements under s. 84.30.

SECTION 4. 59.70 (22) of the statutes is repealed.

SECTION 5. 60.23 (29) of the statutes is repealed.
SECTION 6. 66.0430 of the statutes is created to read:

66.0430 Regulation of billboards. (1) In this section, “political subdivision” means a city, village, town, or county.

(2) A political subdivision may enact an ordinance that regulates the construction and maintenance of billboards and other similar structures on premises abutting on highways in the political subdivision that are maintained by the political subdivision. An ordinance under this section shall promote aesthetic values and public safety on the highways.

SECTION 7. 84.30 (1) of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (1) LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND PURPOSE. To promote the safety, convenience and enjoyment of public travel, to preserve the natural beauty of Wisconsin, to aid in the free flow of interstate commerce, to protect the public investment in highways, and to conform to the expressed intent of congress to control the erection and maintenance of outdoor advertising signs, displays and devices adjacent to the national system of interstate and defense highways, it is hereby declared to be necessary in the public interest to control the erection and maintenance of billboards and other outdoor advertising devices adjacent to said system of interstate and federal-aid primary, and state trunk highways and the Great River Road, and scenic byways.

SECTION 8. 84.30 (2) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (2) (a) “Adjacent area” means an area which is adjacent to and within 660 feet of the nearest edge of the right-of-way of any interstate or primary or state trunk highway or the Great River Road, or a scenic byway, which 660 feet distance shall be measured horizontally along a line normal or perpendicular to the center line of the highway.
SECTION 9. 84.30 (2) (dg) of the statutes is created to read:

84.30 (2) (dg) “Customary maintenance” means any of the following and similar activities when performed to maintain a sign in substantially the same form as when the sign became non-conforming: preparing surfaces for painting; repairing or replacing fasteners such as nails, screws, or bolts; replacing lighting components and associated fixtures; or fastening broken pieces of a sign back together with glue or fasteners. “Customary maintenance” does not include using different materials for any replacement or adding any structural elements such as posts, poles, braces or guy wires, crossbeams, or sign faces.

SECTION 10. 84.30 (2) (im) of the statutes is created to read:

84.30 (2) (im) “Scenic byway” means a highway designated by the department as a scenic byway under s. 84.106.

SECTION 11. 84.30 (2) (j) of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (2) (j) “Sign” means any outdoor advertising sign, display, device, notice, figure, painting, drawing, message, placard, poster, billboard, or other thing, which is designed, intended, or used to advertise or inform, any part of the advertising or informative contents of which is visible from any place on the main-traveled way of any portion of an interstate highway or, primary highway, or state trunk highway or scenic byway.

SECTION 12. 84.30 (2) (jm) of the statutes is created to read:

84.30 (2) (jm) “State trunk highway” has the meaning given in s. 340.01 (60), except that it includes connecting highways.

SECTION 13. 84.30 (3) (intro.) of the statutes is amended to read:
84.30 (3) SIGNS PROHIBITED. (intro.) No sign visible from the main-traveled way of any interstate or federal-aid, or state trunk highway or scenic byway may be erected or maintained, except the following:

SECTION 14. 84.30 (3) (c) 2. of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (3) (c) 2. Signs that are not effectively shielded as to prevent beams or rays of light from being directed at any portion of the traveled ways of the interstate or federal-aid primary, or state trunk highway or scenic byway and that are of such intensity or brilliance as to cause glare or to impair the vision of the driver of any motor vehicle, or that otherwise interfere with any driver's operation of a motor vehicle, are prohibited.

SECTION 15. 84.30 (3) (e) of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (3) (e) Signs to be erected in business areas subsequent to March 18, 1972 which when erected will, but before the effective date of this paragraph .... [LRB inserts date], that comply with sub. (4).

SECTION 16. 84.30 (3) (gm) of the statutes is created to read:

84.30 (3) (gm) Signs that were lawfully in existence on the effective date of this paragraph .... [LRB inserts date], and that conform to the requirements of s. 84.30, 2013 stats.

SECTION 17. 84.30 (3) (h) of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (3) (h) Signs outside the adjacent area which are not erected with the purpose of their message being read from the main-traveled way of an interstate or primary, or state trunk highway or scenic byway.

SECTION 18. 84.30 (4) (intro.) of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (4) SIGN CRITERIA. (intro.) The department shall effectively control or cause to be controlled, the erection and maintenance of outdoor advertising signs,
displays, and devices that are erected subsequent to March 18, 1972, but before the
effective date of this subsection .... [LRB inserts date], in all business areas.
Whenever a bona fide county or local zoning authority has made a determination of
customary use, as to size, lighting and spacing such determination may be accepted
in lieu of controls by agreement in the zoned commercial and industrial areas within
the geographical jurisdiction of such authority. In all other business areas, the
criteria set forth below shall apply:

SECTION 19. 84.30 (4) (b) 1. of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (4) (b) 1. Signs which contain, include, or are illuminated by any flashing,
intermittent, or moving light or lights are prohibited, except those specified in par.
(bm) and those giving public service information such as time, date, temperature,
weather, or similar information.

SECTION 20. 84.30 (4) (b) 2. of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (4) (b) 2. Signs which are not effectively shielded as to prevent beams or
rays of light from being directed at any portion of the traveled ways of the interstate
or federal-aid primary, or state trunk highway or scenic byway and which are of such
intensity or brilliance as to cause glare or to impair the vision of the driver of any
motor vehicle, or which otherwise interfere with any driver’s operation of a motor
vehicle are prohibited.

SECTION 21. 84.30 (4) (bm) of the statutes is repealed.

SECTION 22. 84.30 (4) (c) 1. of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (4) (c) 1. On interstate and federal-aid primary, and state trunk
highways and scenic byways signs may not be located in such a manner as to obscure,
or otherwise physically interfere with the effectiveness of an official traffic sign,
SECTION 22. 84.30 (4) (c) 2. of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (4) (c) 2. On interstate highways and freeways on the federal-aid primary system, and freeways on a state trunk highway or scenic byway no 2 structures shall be spaced less than 500 feet apart. Outside of incorporated villages and cities, no structure may be located adjacent to or within 500 feet of an interchange, intersection at grade, or safety rest area. Said 500 feet shall be measured along the interstate or freeway from the beginning or ending of pavement widening at the exit from or entrance to the main-traveled way.

SECTION 23. 84.30 (4) (c) 3. of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (4) (c) 3. On nonfreeway federal-aid primary and state trunk highways and scenic byways outside incorporated villages and cities, no 2 structures shall be spaced less than 300 feet apart. Within incorporated villages and cities, no 2 structures shall be spaced less than 100 feet apart.

SECTION 24. 84.30 (4m) of the statutes is created to read:

84.30 (4m) ILLUMINATION CRITERIA. Notwithstanding sub. (4), no sign visible from the main-traveled way of any interstate, federal-aid, or state trunk highway or scenic byway may be illuminated unless the owner of the sign has received a permit under sub. (10m) (b).

SECTION 25. 84.30 (5) (bm) of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (5) (bm) Signs lawfully erected, but which do not conform to the requirements of sub. (3) (c), are declared nonconforming but are not subject to removal, except as otherwise provided in this paragraph. To allow such signs to exist, to perform customary maintenance thereon, or to change the advertising message
thereof, does not constitute a violation of sub. (3), but to enlarge, replace, or relocate such signs, or to erect additional signs, shall constitute a violation subjecting the sign to removal without compensation, unless upon completion of such work all signs upon the property conform to the requirements of sub. (3). The owner of any sign declared nonconforming under this paragraph shall maintain a record of all work performed on the sign, including a photograph of each item of work performed, and provide a report to the department of the work performed.

**SECTION 27.** 84.30 (9g) of the statutes is created to read:

84.30 (9g) SIGN DATABASE. (a) The department shall develop and maintain a sign database containing information collected under sub. (9r) and all of the following information with respect to each sign:

1. The name and address of the owner.
2. The name and address of the installer.
3. The name and address of the owner of the parcel on which the sign is located.
4. The name and address of any occupant of the parcel on which the sign is located.
5. Zoning and land use status of the parcel on which the sign is located.
6. If commercial or industrial activity occurs on the parcel on which the sign is located, a description of the activity.
7. Any other information required by the department.

(b) An owner of a sign shall provide all of the information required under par. (a) 1. to 7. to the department and shall update the information whenever the information in the database is no longer accurate.

**SECTION 28.** 84.30 (9r) of the statutes is created to read:
84.30 (9r) Biennial survey. (a) No later than 2 years after the effective date of this paragraph .... [LRB inserts date], and biennially thereafter, the department shall conduct a survey of all signs. The survey shall include all of the following for each sign:

1. A photograph of each side.

2. Approximate measurement of the length and height.

3. An assessment of the sign’s structural type.

4. Approximate measurement of the distance from the sign to the center line of the adjacent highway and to the nearest sign.

(b) If the department learns at a time other than during a biennial survey of a sign that information under par. (a) has changed, the department may update the record for the sign.

(c) Notwithstanding par. (a), if the department determines that there is no reasonable likelihood that information under par. (a) has changed, the department may determine not to survey a sign during a biennial survey.

SECTION 29. 84.30 (10) (a) of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (10) (a) On or after January 1, 1972, no person shall engage or continue to engage in the business of outdoor advertising in areas subject to this section without first obtaining a license therefor from the department. The department shall establish by rule the fee for the issuance or renewal of a license or for the renewal thereof shall be $250 payable in advance. Each license shall remain in force until the next succeeding December 31 and may be renewed annually.

SECTION 30. 84.30 (10m) (title) of the statutes is repealed and recreated to read:

84.30 (10m) (title) Permit requirements.
SECTION 31. 84.30 (10m) of the statutes is renumbered 84.30 (10m) (a) and amended to read:

84.30 (10m) (a) The department may shall promulgate a rule requiring persons specified in the rule to pay annual permit fees for signs. The rule shall specify that no permit fee may be charged for an off-premises advertising sign that is owned by a nonprofit organization. Failure to pay the fee within 2 months after the date on which payment is due is evidence that the sign has been abandoned for the purposes of s. Trans 201.10 (2) (f), Wis. Adm. Code.

SECTION 32. 84.30 (10m) (b) of the statutes is created to read:

84.30 (10m) (b) Upon application, the department shall issue a permit to a sign owner for the illumination of a sign visible from the main-traveled way of an interstate, federal-aid, or state trunk highway or scenic byway if the illumination of the sign complies with sub. (4) and rules promulgated by the department under sub. (14) (c).

SECTION 33. 84.30 (10s) of the statutes is created to read:

84.30 (10s) DETERMINATION OF FEES. The department shall set the fees under subs. (10) (a) and (10m) (a) so as to recover the department’s approximate cost of administering s. 84.30.

SECTION 34. 84.30 (14) of the statutes is amended to read:

84.30 (14) DEPARTMENT RULES. (a) The department may promulgate rules deemed necessary to implement and enforce this section.

(b) The department shall promulgate rules to restrict the erection and maintenance of signs as to their lighting, size, number, and spacing when such signs are visible from the highway but outside the adjacent area.
(d) The department shall by rule establish a priority system for the removal or relocation of all signs not specified in sub. (5) (d) which fail to conform to the requirements of sub. (5).

SECTION 35. 84.30 (14) (c) of the statutes is created to read:

84.30 (14) (c) The department shall promulgate rules establishing size, height, setback, brightness, and hours of operation standards for signs that are illuminated.

SECTION 36. 84.305 of the statutes is repealed.

SECTION 37. 227.43 (1) (bg) of the statutes, as affected by 2015 Wisconsin Act 137, is amended to read:

227.43 (1) (bg) Assign a hearing examiner to preside over any hearing or review under ss. 84.30 (18), 84.305, 84.31 (6) (a), 85.013 (1), 86.073 (3), 86.16 (5), 86.195 (9) (b), 86.32 (1), 101.935 (2) (b), 101.951 (7) (a) and (b), 114.134 (4) (b), 114.135 (9), 114.20 (19), 175.05 (4) (b), 194.145 (1), 194.46, 218.0114 (7) (d) and (12) (b), 218.0116 (2), (4), (7) (a), (8) (a) and (10), 218.0131 (3), 218.11 (7) (a) and (b), 218.22 (4) (a) and (b), 218.32 (4) (a) and (b), 218.41 (4), 218.51 (5) (a) and (b), 341.09 (2m) (d), 342.26, 343.69, 348.105 (5) (h), and 348.25 (9).

SECTION 38. 289.33 (3) (d) of the statutes is amended to read:

289.33 (3) (d) “Local approval” includes any requirement for a permit, license, authorization, approval, variance or exception or any restriction, condition of approval or other regulation, requirement or prohibition imposed by a charter ordinance, general ordinance, zoning ordinance, resolution or regulation by a town, city, village, county or special purpose district, including without limitation because of enumeration any ordinance, resolution or regulation adopted under s. 91.73, 2007 stats., s. 59.03 (2), 59.11 (5), 59.42 (1), 59.48, 59.51 (1) and (2), 59.52 (2), (5), (6), (7), (8), (9), (11), (12), (13), (15), (16), (17), (18), (19), (20), (21), (22), (23), (24),
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(25), (26) and (27), 59.53 (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (7), (8), (9), (11), (12), (13), (14), (15), (19),
(20) and (23), 59.535 (2), (3) and (4), 59.54 (1), (2), (3), (4), (4m), (5), (6), (7), (8), (10),
(11), (12), (16), (17), (18), (19), (20), (21), (22), (23), (24), (25) and (26), 59.55 (3), (4),
(5) and (6), 59.56 (1), (2), (4), (5), (6), (7), (9), (10), (11), (12), (12m), (13) and (16), 59.57
(1), 59.58 (1) and (5), 59.62, 59.69, 59.692, 59.693, 59.696, 59.697, 59.698, 59.70 (1),
(2), (3), (5), (7), (8), (9), (10), (11), (21), (22) and (23), 59.79 (1), (2), (3), (5), (7), (8), and
(10), 59.792 (2) and (3), 59.80, 59.82, 60.10, 60.22, 60.23, 60.54, 60.77, 61.34, 61.35,
196.58, 200.11 (8), 236.45, 281.43 or 349.16, subch. VIII of ch. 60, or subch. III of ch.
91.

SECTION 39. Initial applicability.

(1) The treatment of section 84.30 (2) (dg) and (5) (bm) of the statutes first applies to work performed on a sign on the effective date of this subsection.

SECTION 40. Effective dates. This act takes effect on the day after publication, except as follows:

(1) The treatment of sections 20.395 (9) (aq) and 84.30 (10) (a), (10m) (a), and (10s) of the statutes takes effect on the first day of the 13th month beginning after publication.

(END)