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County Council approves illegal sign removal

Illegally placed commercial signs in the county right of way can be removed immediately under an ordinance the Pierce County Council approved Tuesday night.

Ordinance 2007-44s amends the county's sign code by eliminating a requirement that the county give sign owners 48 hours notice prior to removing their illegal signs. It also makes the offense a civil infraction carrying a \$250 penalty.

"The makeshift, plastic-and-cardboard signs that appear on our traffic signs and utility poles are unsightly, unsafe and unlawful," said Councilmember Roger Bush (District 3), the measure's prime sponsor. "We don't give anyone else 48 hours notice before citing them for an illegal act, and this shouldn't be any different."

Passed at the council's first meeting on Anderson Island Tuesday evening, the ordinance clears the way for county Public Works & Utilities staff to begin a four-month sign enforcement pilot project. Beginning July 11, illegal commercial signs will be photographed, removed and documented in a 55-square-mile area of unincorporated Pierce County bounded by Highway 512 to the north, 224th Street East to the south, Highway 161 to the east and Fort Lewis to the west.

The pilot project will be evaluated in October so the council can decide whether or not to fund an expanded version in the county's 2008 budget. In the meantime, an ad-hoc committee will develop a long-term plan dealing with large, professional signs such as those used by realtors to direct drivers to newly built homes and subdivisions.
