

# NEW TAB RATINGS:

## It's About Time (and Speed)



By Emerson Schwartzkopf

When the Traffic Audit Bureau (TAB) started offering its new ratings for out-of-home advertising in mid-June, the industry began getting a dose of reality.

And, for operators and clients alike, it's mostly good news.

After preliminary speculation – pro and con – about the changing system ([“A Critical Time in the Evolution of Measurement,”](#) May-June 2013 *Out of Home*), the new measurements offer increases for some structures, expanded demographics on viewers and authoritative stats for digital displays.

“There’s so many changes,” says Joe Philport, TAB president/CEO, “that we’re calling this release of ratings version 2.0.”

The new ratings reflect the growing influence of changing displays on the roadside/street-side market, and the concept of looking at time-of-day and traffic speeds works to the benefit of digital – and in many cases, also for static signage.

Philport credits data licensed from Kirkland, Wash.-based INRIX Inc. in providing a wider, more-detailed view of traffic patterns.

“The major challenge we had to address was getting an idea of the speed in which people pass standard and digital inventory,” Philport says. “Rather than doing a standard calculation that represents taking a weekly count, the visibility part of the research

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program has been updated to include the impact of congestion and speed."

With TAB's previous Eyes On system, traffic flow was noted as reference speed, or something close to the speed limit of a roadway.

"What we're doing now is showing how the noting of an ad varies at various speeds and volume," Philport says, "so that some boards where there's heavy congestion will see a greater increase in noting than boards where traffic is free-flow with very little congestion."

The system doesn't use real-time sampling – INRIX provides historical data – but TAB is looking at traffic flow on an hour-by-hour, day-by-day basis. Results so far offer some interesting insights, benefiting static as well as digital displays.

For standard roadside structures with one ad, according to TAB's new ratings, audience impressions are up 18%. That average, though, can be misleading; larger formats on major roads saw higher increases due to previous measurements using the standard reference speed, and the

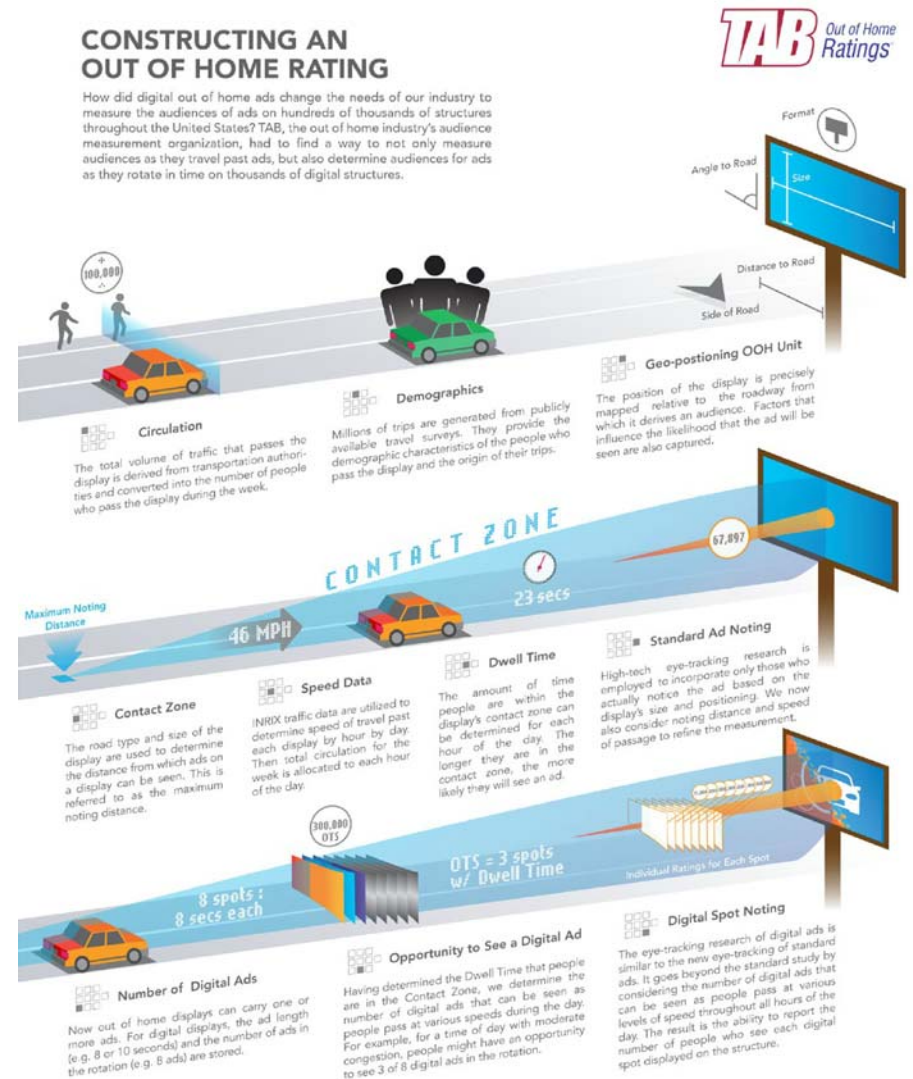
difference between congested speed and the speed limit is greatest on interstates and highways. (Most urban format saw little change in audience.)

Digital bulletins averaged a 100% increase in audience delivery, as impressions are averaged across six to eight spots in a rotation. Digital posters, due to smaller sizes and placement on a variety of road types, experienced a 20% increase.

An extreme example – but one that illustrates the effectiveness of the new ratings – came with a 16' X 60' digital bulletin on an East Coast interstate. The posted speed limit is 65 mph; however, high congestion translates into a 25 mph speed, with drivers seeing a 6 mph crawl during some hours.

Using 65 mph as the standard, the digital structure showed delivery of 588,581 impressions. Using the segmented day-and-speed variables, the new TAB ratings showed a total delivery of 3,946,646 impressions for eight spots in the rotation, or 493,3332 for each ad spot.

"The ratings will have much greater precision," Philport says. "They're more



refined. The value of one unit versus another, in terms of value, will be easier to discern.”

The refined data also provide precise measurements in transit advertising, where it’s not just people passing by ads – but ads passing by people. Of the 1.55 million transit ads, roughly one-third of the ads (approximately 350,000) are bus, rail and other mobile exterior ads.

“The bigger challenge is that those ads are moving,” Philport says. “Now we have to figure out, for example, where a bus is going as it drives through the market at various times of day.”

The new ratings system is more than a greater focus on time and speed. The available demographic segments increased from 90 to 240, defined by combinations of age/gender, race/ethnicity and income. Reporting now offers \$200K+ as an upper income group; there’s also an ability to refine income and age groups by race/ethnicity.

There’s even more potential in the numbers; while dayparting and spot-ratings aren’t being offered with the overall ratings system, Philport says the capability exists. Data can get richer in the ratings ... and also more voluminous.

“One of the things that’s a gating factor isn’t the accuracy of the numbers,” Philport says. “It’s developing applications that the industry can use to get at the numbers easily and get at the value of them.”

Philport notes that third-party processors are working on ways to make it easier to use TAB ratings and plan charting systems for ads. It’s the ability to interpret the new numbers that may ease some of the initial resistance from companies selling mainly on locations.

“We’ve seen more and more of these processors begin to develop applications that reach more deeply into the marketplace,” Philport says.

While the new ratings system is rolling, there’s still plenty of ground-level work for TAB in helping the industry learn what they have – and what they can do with it.

“One of the challenges has been to get our

members to use this information in a more-standardized way in the buy/sell process,” Philport says, “and to use the ratings in a way that other ratings systems are used by other local media like radio and TV.”

Currently, TAB has a training program in place (with the help of the Outdoor Advertising Association of America) and offered seminars in several markets.

“The feedback has been very, very positive,” he says. “It’s ongoing training about the use of the numbers, and how to sell out-of-home more strategically.”

### TAB Locations by the Numbers

<b>Overall roadside ads:</b>	<b>400,000 (nearly)</b>
Billboards (bulletins, posters, jr. posters)	300,000 (nearly)
Transit shelters and related formats	50,000 (approx.)
Digital spots	32,000 (approx., on 4,000 digital structures)
Smaller formats (benches, etc.)	<20,000
<b>Overall transit ads:</b>	<b>1,550,000 (approx.)</b>
Interior/station ads	1,200,000 (approx.)
Bus/rail/mobile exterior ads	350,000 (approx.)

Source: Traffic Audit Bureau