

(Continued)

nesses. The resolution asserts that "the Oklahoma Legislature recognizes the importance of small businesses to the economic viability of Oklahoma."

Mitch Surrett, general counsel for the Department of Transportation, said if Oklahoma does not comply with federal regulation the state would stand to lose critical funding for transportation. Surrett explained that many believed outdoor advertising was "ugly." However, because there were thousands of signs already standing, there was a provision to "grandfather" them into the Act.

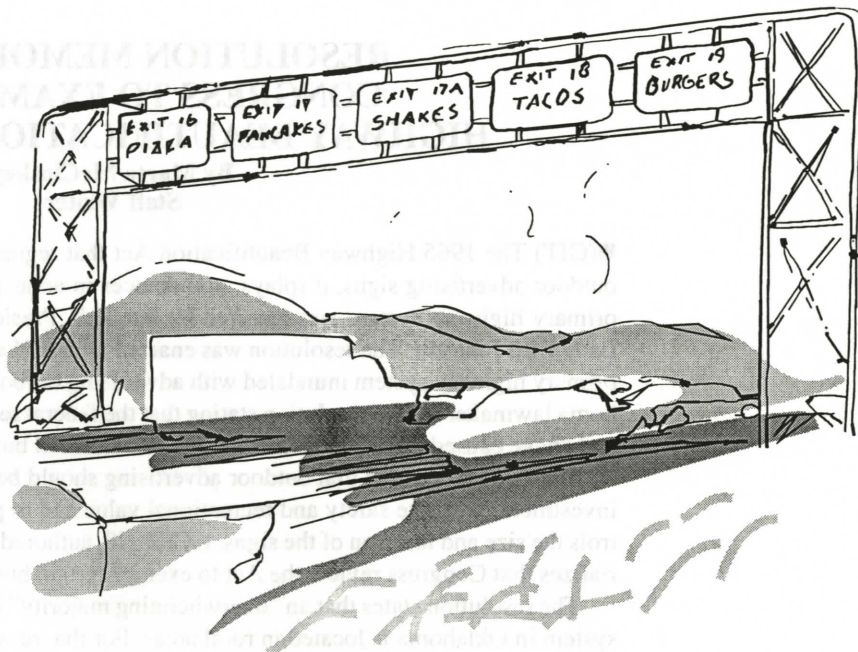
Surrett said that in 1972 an agreement was made between the state and the federal government. The agreement addressed all aspects of the national policy relative to the control of outdoor advertising. It was up to the state to enforce the agreed upon regulations, but Surrett explained that no additional federal funding was allotted to enforce the rules.

Over the years, many were unaware of the regulations, Surrett said. However in 1992, the state received funding as a result of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). This enabled them to enforce the 1972 agreement.

Surrett explained that there are exemptions for churches, non-profit groups and small businesses in the federal regulations. They can erect signs eight square feet in size. However, Surrett said he believed those standards could be expanded to 32 square feet, as long as the sign was used in directing the public to the location.

Presently, businesses can use logo signs located only on interstates. However, Surrett said due to cost, usually only national chains, not "mom and pop stores" can afford to advertise on them. He explained that an unregistered sign is illegal. It costs a \$100 to register a sign and an additional \$20 each year after for renewal.

The resolution could be heard as early as next week in the House.



"Darn, I didn't get which exit is for tacos!
Now we'll have to go another fifty miles to the next overhead sign."