

'Break-away' Overhead Sign Receives First Crash Test

Texas Transportation Institute conducted the first full-scale crash test of its new breakaway overhead sign bridge Tuesday, with only moderate damage to the test vehicle.

The test was witnessed by highway officials from 20 states, the District of Columbia and the U. S. Bureau of Public Roads. The safety-oriented research project is being conducted under a \$206,000 contract sponsored by the participating states, including Texas.

Sign bridges are structures which support the large information and direction markers extending over freeways and interstate highways. Supports for such structures are potential hazards if a vehicle veers out of control off the roadway.

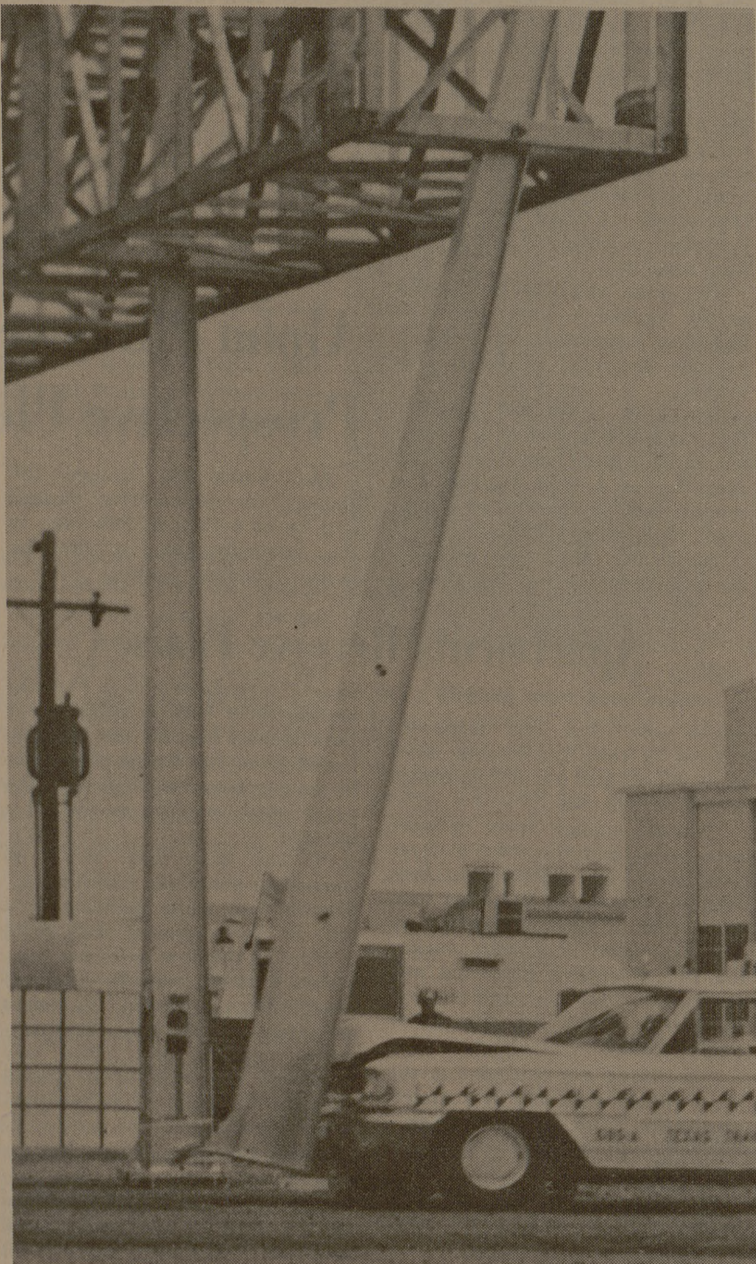
Dr. Robert Olson, TTI associate research engineer who heads the project, said he was "satisfied with the results." He indicated, however, the degree of success can be determined only by careful analysis of various photographic and electronic data.

From all indications, the driver or other occupants of the vehicle would not have been injured, provided they had been wearing seat belts, Olson noted. The car was equipped with a dummy driver.

TTI hopes to solve the signal safety problem by applying the same break-away concept which has been successful with standard highway signs erected on the shoulder. The base of the sign is designed to disengage upon impact and swing up out of the path of the vehicle, with the structure's other three supports bearing all the sign bridge's weight.

Upon impact, the catapulted vehicle was traveling at 25 mph. Olson said later tests will be conducted at 60 mph.

The vehicle's grill and radiator were damaged, but the impact was not severe enough to break the headlights.



POLE GIVES

A Texas Transportation Institute test vehicle sustains only moderate damage after crashing through a "break-away" support for an overhead sign bridge. The safety-oriented project is being conducted by the A&M facility under a \$206,000 contract sponsored by 21 highway departments and administered by the U. S. Bureau of Public Roads. Sign bridges support the large information markers extended over freeways and interstate highways.

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