

Ferdie J. Deering

JUL 3 1975

New Bus Name Easier on Tongue

COTPA has changed its name to Masstrans. This might not be the biggest event that has happened lately, but it is a step away from an alphabetical riddle for our local bus system.

COTPA was a failure as an acronym. It was a tongue-twister and not everybody bothered to translate it into Central Oklahoma Transportation and Parking Authority. The public has mostly ignored both COTPA and its buses.

Whether the buses will become better known, more highly regarded and more fully packed under the new name of Masstrans is not yet determined, but moving away from initials should help.

According to a New York management concern, 169 major corporations changed their names in 1974, and most of them switched from names to initials. The firm referred to this as a "plunge into instant anonymity." COTPA has gone the other way.

Changing the name of a business can be costly and it is not always as beneficial as anticipated. Business

may drop off if customers fail to find an old familiar title and colors.

Even so, with corporations and businesses changing ownership through mergers and acquisitions, name changes also must be expected. In pioneer days, settlers often found it was a mistake to ask: "What was your name before you moved to Oklahoma?", but it might be a good idea for investors to ask that sort of question about a corporation before putting their money into its stock.

One of the most expensive name changes was the switch made by Standard Oil Co. (New Jersey) to Exxon Corp. early in 1973. It had 25,000 service stations, each with as many as 50 signs, which had to be replaced. Cost of the switch and promotion was announced to exceed \$100 million.

Cities Service Oil Co. used to be a familiar name to most Oklahomans, but after its service stations changed their signs to Citgo, it pretty well disappeared.

Among other famous name changes are Swift & Co., which now is unknown as Esmark, Inc., and

Western Union, which hardly anybody recognizes as WUI, Inc. United Air Lines modernized its design last year and streamlined its name by changing it to United Airlines, perhaps assuming that two words would fly better than three.

After being published for nearly 150 years under the title of "Country Gentleman", this major farm magazine had its name changed to "Better Farming Methods" upon advice of New York advertising experts. It lasted about a year after that.

A short name, like Life or Look, is attractive, but even these can disappear, and a long title is no assurance of success either. For example, delegates to the Third United Nations Law of the Sea Conference at Geneva earlier this year had some nice long titles, like this one:

"Special Assistant to the Special Representative of the President of the Law of the Sea Conference and Assistant Legal Adviser for Ocean, Environment and Scientific Affairs, Office of the Legal Adviser, Department of State."

That conference didn't settle much of anything.