

Asphalt Zipper Grinds 4,000 Square Feet Per Hour

Milling-attachment company's new owners are turning skeptical customers into successful contractors

By LARRY STEWART, Executive Editor

If you need to trench through asphalt, the Asphalt Zipper will cut through the pavement faster than sawing and more cheaply than using a dedicated milling machine. Asphalt Zipper is a milling attachment that comes with its own power—a choice of 125 or 185 horsepower Deere diesels. The bigger machine can grind a swath up to 48 inches wide, 12 inches deep at rates of up to 4,000 square feet per hour.

When we first wrote about the Asphalt Zipper in 1994, it seemed likely we'd see it again. After all, an attachment that slips easily into a loader bucket and can produce those kinds of production rates has all the makings of a popular tool. But the inventors had some reliability issues with the machine that, naturally, tend to dampen users' enthusiasm. Under new ownership for about two years now, the company claims to have fixed the problems. That's why *Construction Equipment* wanted to talk to a customer.

Leon Van Sickle, owner of Van Con Construction in Springville, Utah, bought Asphalt Zipper's AZ480 when the hydrostatic milling attachment he was using started causing too much downtime on a big job. Van Con is working on a \$3.5 million contract to install 37,000 feet of 24-inch, 30-inch, and 36-inch ductile iron pipe for an irrigation system in Spanish Fork, Utah.

About 25,000 feet of the pipe is being laid below asphalt roads. Using the Zipper's 48-inch cutter head, one Van Con operator can mill the 4- to 6-inch-thick asphalt 1,000 feet ahead of a pipe-laying crew in less than two hours.

The operator uses the same wheel loader to unload pipe and fittings for each crew. By unloading the materials first, then milling well ahead of the pipe-laying operation and moving on to repeat the process for the next crew, a single Zipper operator easily supports five crews on the job. And because the machine leaves the trench full of the 1-inch-minus rubble it generates, streets don't have to be closed or restricted.

Milling-head maintenance is simple, but crucial to effective operation. Van Con has been spending about an hour and a half maintaining the Zipper and its bullet teeth every day.

"If you break one off, it won't be long before you take out the tool holder, which is a bigger hassle than just keeping the teeth in good shape," he says.



A Utah contractor finds the AZ480 can grind a 1,000-foot trench 48 inches wide through 6-inch asphalt in about an hour.

Basic Specifications

Model	Engine	Cutter Widths (in.)	Weight (lb.)	Price
AZ360	125-hp 4-cylinder	18, 24, 30, 36	4,660	
AZ480	185-hp 8-cylinder	18, 24, 30, 36, 42, 48	5,600	

Zipper uses Deere engines and drives its custom-built cutter heads through a twin-disk power take-off and a Brevini gear reducer.

The [redacted] that Van Sickle paid for his Zipper is nearly equal what he would spend renting a dedicated milling machine for the project. When we visited, the machine had logged about 250 hours without a problem. He said the Zipper would top 400 hours before the project is finished, and he expects to have at least that many hours of work for it to do in each of the coming years.

The machines attach by sliding the bucket cutting edge into the Zip'n-Go slot in the Zipper's frame. Chains hold the attachment in place when the loader's forward pressure is not pressing it into the bucket.

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