

Full-Depth Reclamation Can Actually Stretch Your Budget

By Jim Keller

Rising oil prices have recently caused huge jumps in the price of asphalt. Of course this is nothing new to anybody reading this magazine. Couple that with a not-so-rosy economy, slashed road budgets and layoffs and it seems you've got a recipe for nothing but bad news for road crews.

However there is some good news on the horizon for contractors, city and county road departments! As costs have soared, road departments have had to look more closely at alternative methods of road repair. And the most cost-effective method to surface by far is full-depth reclamation or FDR.

FDR is the pulverizing and the blending of the deteriorated asphalt road surface into the base. This strengthens the base and effectively recycles the as-

phalt, giving it another life as base material, saving a huge amount of time and money. You save because you don't have to pay to excavate the old asphalt, load it onto dump trucks and haul it off and then haul in more base material. In addition, it's much faster. And everyone knows time is money.

This method is also far more effective than the popular mill and fill method of grinding off a couple of inches and laying new asphalt on top. Sure, the road looks great for a while but the cracks that were in the old surface soon reflect up through the new asphalt and the process starts all over again. FDR solves asphalt problems where they begin, in the base. Chemical additives like emulsions, Portland cement lime and fly ash can also be added to further strengthen the base.

A company out of Utah manufactures a machine that is quickly gaining popularity in Canada because of its size and price. It's an FDR attachment that mounts on the bucket of a wheel loader or backhoe but it has the power of the larger, self-powered reclaimer machines. And here's the good news, it's priced so any municipality or contractor can afford it. It's called the Asphalt Zipper. Van Ed Equipment in Surrey, BC is the local dealer. (604-888-9020) (www.asphaltzipper.ca)

Here's why it's becoming so popular. A patch repair job that would normally take 2 days can now be done in 4 hours or less using the Zipper. City and county road crews everywhere report a savings of 300-400% using this machine, and that's being conservative! Many have said it's like getting a huge



budget increase for the same amount!

For example, a street department supervisor in Ontario says his Asphalt Zipper can pulverize a street and get it ready for paving for about 37 cents per square meter instead of \$2.50 to \$4.00 the traditional way.

Contractors doing utility trenching are also finding a way to save using this handy machine. Instead of having to saw-cut both sides of a utility trench, peel up the asphalt, load it on dump trucks and haul it off, they just "Zip-it." The asphalt is simply pulverized full-depth, in place, to open the trench. It can then be excavated with the rest of the trench and used as backfill. This method saves contractors untold hours and expense.

Jason Ballum of Canadian Utility Construction in Surrey, British Columbia

had this to say about the ease of opening trenches:

"We are a utility contractor here in Western Canada," said Ballum. "If we are not laying pipelines, we are repairing them. We purchased the AZ-300 (a 76 cm cutting width model) because it looked like a faster way to open trenches in asphalt. We were right. Our crews really like the machine because it is so much faster than saw cutting, digging up the asphalt and hauling it off. This way the asphalt is reusable right back in the trench."

Another contractor, Tag Construction, in Langley, BC, also uses the Asphalt Zipper to open trenches. He only uses the Zipper about one hour each day. But in that one hour he is able to open more trench than his crew can lay pipe in one day!

The 76 cm model will pulverize asphalt at the rate



of about 300 linear meters per hour in 15-20 cm thick asphalt. The larger 121 cm models will do about 500 linear meters per hour.

When budgets are being cut and money is scarce, everybody looks for faster, more economical methods of getting the job done. Taxpayers still expect services for their money so road repairs still have to be done. But if you can get 3 to 4 times more road repair work done using the same amount of money, that's a big deal in today's economy! And recycling old asphalt back into the road instead of dumping it in a landfill is something every Canadian can get behind. ♣

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