

Sheboygan asphalt recycling called a money saver

Jason Smathers Sheboygan Press Media 10:16 a.m. CDT August 22, 2015



(Photo: Gary C. Klein/Sheboygan Press Media)

If you've been grumbling lately about the strips of asphalt taken out of Sheboygan streets, you might be happy to know that they'll be made whole soon enough. In fact, the whole road will.

That's because the strips are part of the city's use of so-called "hot-in-place" asphalt recycling. Instead of taking an asphalt road with cracks and crannies and rebuilding the entire section, construction crews simply chew up the damaged asphalt, infuse it with new oil and reapply the material back on the road.

Mayor Mike Vandersteen, who helped push the use of the technique after viewing its use in Manitowoc, said it is so cost-efficient that the city has been able to double the number of roads they initially planned on repairing with the more than \$400,000 appropriated for it.

"This is kind of like a pilot project for us, and so far the feeling for us has been that it's very positive," Vandersteen said. "The feeling is that (the Public Works Department) will continue to expand this process and use it in the future."

The new process — which was contracted out to Gallagher Asphalt — is viewed as a potential boon to the city's road repair efforts, which have been hampered by staff cuts, budget tightening and capital borrowing limitations in the last few years

Bill Hoppe, a representative for Gallagher Asphalt, described the process at Monday's Common Council meeting: Crews use two large heaters to increase the temperature of the asphalt to 320 degrees Fahrenheit, introduce new oil to the road, mix up the asphalt and oil with tines and an augur and then repave and steamroll the mixture into a rejuvenated, usable road.

While Hoppe said Gallagher usually recommends using the process for roads that are still in relatively good condition, most communities ask for it when they're on the line between "fair" and "poor" condition. However, if they use it as a form of pavement preservation rather than an alternative to traditional road repair, Hoppe said they can save themselves a lot more money in the long run.

"If you get a road at the right time, don't let it get too bad, you can spend one dollar to save yourself eight dollars and essentially get a perpetual pavement," Hoppe said.

While the process does save the city money, it's not a fix-all. For instance, streets like Pennsylvania Avenue or Saemann Avenue that require sewer or gutter work will need a full resurfacing by conventional means rather than the recycling process.

Residents who drive over recently paved roads may still hear the clattering of work remnants as they drive by. Vandersteen said that's because the process doesn't remove all the tar from the asphalt, but added that a combination of a sealing treatment and city street sweepers should clean up what's left behind.

Crews from Gallagher are expected to finish work sometime early next week.

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Under repair

Roads being repaired through "Hot-in-place" asphalt recycling include"

North Eight Street from Michigan Avenue to Highland Avenue

North Avenue from 15th Street to 10th Street

Michigan Avenue from 4th Street to 8th Street

15th Street from Pennsylvania Avenue to New Jersey Avenue

Union Avenue from Sauk Trail Road to S. Business Drive

N. Taylor Frontage Road from Erie Avenue to Kwik Trip