

Faster, cheaper road paving: Jefferson County tests new approach

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by Lauren Walsh

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JEFFERSON COUNTY, Ala. — Jefferson County is testing out a faster, cheaper way to pave roads, which could allow more miles to be paved each year.

The new technique called Hot in Place Recycling. It reuses the asphalt already on the road.

Ads by ZINC

“Heating the road to 300 degrees, it loosens the asphalt in the road,” Jefferson County Manager Tony Petelos explained. “They have augers that come back and then the packer comes right behind it.”

Petelos says the process creates the same end result as a more traditional approach, which removes the existing asphalt and brings in new material.

He says it saves both time and money.

“We’re saving because we’re recycling 100 percent of that material, which in the past when you pull that material off the roadway. You have to haul it somewhere and then haul it back,” explained Petelos. “So, you’re keeping a lot of truck traffic, saving money transporting and keeping trucks off the highway.”

The county estimates a 25 to 30 percent savings. That means for every ten miles paved this way, they’ll be able to pave an extra two or three more.

“I like it if it holds up,” Bob Harris, a driver watching the road work. “When you do less you wonder if it’s going to hold up but I’m all for doing more.”

Right now, crews are testing out the new technique on 15th Street, which connects Bessemer and Hueytown.

That’s a drive Harris takes every day.

“Places it’s pretty difficult,” Harris explained.

He says he’s already seeing progress.

“It’ll be more enjoyable,” said Harris.

Petelos says if the savings and road quality prove to be true, they’ll be using this method more often across the county.

“I’m almost certain this is the first in Alabama,” said Petelos. “I know it is the first in Jefferson County.”