

# Remarks to the Pavement Selection Advisory Council

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An association for the development, improvement and advancement of quality  
asphalt pavement construction in Ohio.

Absolutely Asphalt ... for Cost, for Convenience, for Comfort !!

I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to provide a few introductory remarks. I also appreciate the packet of information that was provided. I'd like to start by thanking the council members for being here and volunteering your time for this important and challenging task. I would also like to thank the Ohio Department of Transportation for devoting so much energy to developing a pavement selection process that tries to make pavement selection decisions that are in the best interest of the people of Ohio. I'm confident we'll emerge from this process with a definitive policy.

The asphalt industry has always viewed the Ohio Department of Transportation as its most important customer for obvious reasons. In the 1960s, Ohio's interstate highway system was primarily built of concrete – the predominant pavement of the time. Since then most of the system has either been paved over or replaced with asphalt. This didn't happen overnight.

The evolution of asphalt as a product in Ohio happened incrementally, as our industry endeavored to respond to the needs of our number one customer, with new technology and processes. As ODOT identified an area in which pavement could perform better, we developed the means of answering that need. The result is today's highway system, which is surfaced mostly with asphalt.

The reason for asphalt's success is that simple. We developed a product that made sense for Cost, for Convenience and for Comfort. We've given ODOT what it has asked for time and again. We will continue to view ODOT as our most important customer and, as such, respond to ODOT's new pavement selection policy by developing our product accordingly – as we have in the past. We will make our product work for ODOT. All we need to know is what ODOT wants. All we expect is for ODOT to judge all pavements by the same set of standards.

That's why it's important to define what we're here to do.

First, I'd like to point out what we are not here to do: This advisory council is not here to decide what type of pavement ODOT should use. This council is not here to divvy up a pie of construction work between two industries. We are not here to make Ohio's pavement selection policy consistent with other states. We are not here to develop a new selection process.

What we are here to do is to review this process, Pavement Selection the ODOT Way, to assure that it is colorblind. You enter the data and a pavement is selected. We're here to make sure the process judges pavement types on merit. The desired outcome should be that the best pavement for each project is selected, not a manipulation of the numbers so a predetermined percentage of projects goes to each industry. If that were the goal then this would all be a waste of time.

But that's not what the legislature had in mind when it set up this committee. That would be an abuse of the trust Ohioans place in ODOT as stewards of their tax dollars. It would be counterproductive to ensuring competition. In charging us to evaluate ODOT's pavement selection process, our job is to look at the process itself, not the outcome of the process. It makes no difference if the process picks a given pavement type some of the time, all the time, or none of the time. A good process will result in a good outcome.

Are the categories and items in this pavement selection process really important components of a well-constructed road? How important is each factor? How do you quantify the ideal road? A process that does this will select the pavement type for us. If a pavement type is deficient in one of the selection categories, it will be an incentive to develop new technology or processes to accommodate the demands of the customer. That is competition.

These are two industries with products that are constantly evolving and improving with time. There have been many changes in hot mix asphalt that have had a positive impact on its cost, performance and longevity making it today's predominate paving material. Just as concrete was the predominant pavement in the 1960s, improvements in technology may increase its usage in the future. If the selection process remains focused on selecting the best product attributes, it will select the most appropriate product today and tomorrow, whatever it may be.

Our job is clear. Ensure ODOT is selecting the right pavement for the job by analyzing and evaluating the attributes that make up a great pavement.

I'd like to point out that while it has been suggested that Ohio's policies are somehow out of step with the rest of the country, we know the opposite to be true. In fact Ohio's pavement construction practices are very much in line with national trends. We look forward to sharing information on this subject with the neutral third party.

And while we're talking about other states, it's worth noting that throughout this process, the quality of Ohio's roads has never been called into question. In fact, according to the Federal Highway Administration, Ohio ranks in the top 10 states for pavement smoothness. We've got one of the best highway systems in the country, and that's not an accident. It's not the job of this advisory council to fix what is not broken. Just because some states select pavement differently is not a good reason to change a system in Ohio, if Ohio's system works better. The legislature's charge to compare and contrast Ohio with other states, is not a mandate to make Ohio uniform with other states. It means the neutral third party should evaluate and recommend elements of other state's policies, if they are better than Ohio's. If it could be argued that somehow Ohio's roads were not up to snuff nationally, that would be a different story. But since the opposite is true, we shouldn't be lemmings. I believe many of the states that do things differently could stand to learn something from Ohio, because we build good roads. Our tax dollars should be spent on the best performing pavement that is the best value, and our pavement selection process should ensure these pavements are selected.

I'd also like to point out that it's inaccurate to say the asphalt industry is perfectly happy with ODOT's existing pavement selection policy. To the contrary, we certainly have not agreed with everything that is in the policy. We had 16 pages of comments on the first draft. Most of these comments and suggestions did not result in a change in the policy. While we may have questioned some of ODOT's thought processes, we have never called into question its motivation. We look forward to the opportunity to share our objections with the neutral third party.

To summarize, I challenge the committee to remain focused on the mandate given to us by the legislature. We are here to evaluate ODOT's pavement selection process. The process will select the pavement, not us.

You know that I am here to represent the asphalt industry. Mr. Norris is here to represent the concrete industry. Only you can make this process work. Being a member of this committee is a great responsibility to the people of Ohio because the policies created by this council will dictate how hundreds of millions of tax dollars will be spent. It will be easy to get derailed into arguments about which pavement type you or I or Mr. Norris likes better. Don't fall into that trap. We must remain focused on the pavement selection process, not the outcome it produces.

These are two dynamic industries that should compete on the merits of their products. If one pavement is selected most of the time, it doesn't signal a flaw in the process – it signals a flaw in the pavement that is not selected.

Ohio has a terrific highway system that will become more and more integral to our state's prosperity. The professionals at ODOT have been diligent in their effort to develop a process they consider correct. As long as we stay focused on the reasonableness of that process and not its outcome, we'll insure that it will select pavements that are in the best interest of the motoring and tax-paying public.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to comment.