Pavement Preservation Process

A. Pavement Deterioration

The concept behind pavement preservation is to treat pavements while they are still in good condition and without serious structural damage. Successive, systematic treatments will extend the service life and delay the more expensive major reconstruction project. In order to apply the appropriate preventative maintenance treatment at the optimum time, the history and the current condition of a pavement section must be evaluated. Preventative maintenance techniques address the pavement surface condition and do not impact the structural capacity of the pavement. If the structural carrying capacity is affecting the condition of the roadway, it is probably not a candidate for preventative maintenance and it is best to program as a reconstruction project. The causes of any pavement deterioration for various types of pavements must be accurately determined. Typical causes of deterioration for each pavement type include the following:

1. **Flexible Pavements:** Flexible pavements, hot mix asphalt, or other bituminous pavements are affected by traffic, environmental/aging, material problems, and moisture intrusion. These elements impact the pavement in different ways:

    a. **Traffic:** Traffic can lead to load related distresses, such as rutting or fatigue cracking in the wheel paths. Fatigue can lead to development of potholes. Also polishing of the surface leads to friction loss.

    b. **Environmental/Aging:** The environment and aging can lead to oxidation of the asphalt, block cracking, and raveling. Environmental elements can also cause the development of thermal cracks, which are seen as regularly spaced transverse cracks.

    c. **Material Problems:** Material problems include bleeding, shoving, stripping, and surface deformation.

    d. **Moisture Infiltration:** Moisture infiltration can cause further breakdown of existing cracks and thus increased roughness.

2. **Rigid Pavements:** For rigid PCC pavements, the general causes of deterioration include traffic loading, environmental factors, material problems, construction problems, joint deterioration, and moisture infiltration.

    a. **Traffic:** Traffic can lead to load related distress, such as mid-slab cracking, pumping, faulting, and corner breaks. Polishing and the subsequent loss of friction is also traffic related.

    b. **Environmental and Materials:** D-cracking and alkali-silica reactivity (ASR) are material problems. Freeze-thaw action and poor entrained air can affect joint stability.

    c. **Construction Problems:** Construction quality can cause cracking and surface defects in the form of map cracking and spalls.

d. **Joint Deterioration:** Incompressible materials in the joint from poor joint seal maintenance can cause joint spalls.

e. **Moisture Infiltration:** Moisture can lead to further breakdown of cracks and spalls and increased roughness. It can also contribute to pumping, transverse joint faulting, and corner breaks.

B. Evaluating Pavement Conditions

Numerous pieces of information need to be examined in order to determine if the pavement section is a candidate for preventative maintenance and the selection of the type of treatment that best meets that pavement section's needs. The extent of the evaluation process will vary depending on the roadway classification and the type of project. In each case, once the information is compiled, engineering judgment must be applied to determine the correct treatment to use to address the distresses exhibited by each section of pavement.

1. **Background Data:** Obtain data from project files, such as original design parameters, construction information regarding materials, subgrade/subbase information, current traffic data, and maintenance activities undertaken on that roadway section. This information can sometimes be difficult to locate if a good record system has not been established, but as much information as possible should be compiled. Discussions with agency engineering and maintenance staff members can potentially fill in gaps in records.

2. **Existing Condition:** Undertake a visual site inspection to obtain information about the condition of the pavement. Ascertain information on what types of distress are exhibited by the pavement section. Note any restrictions such as right-of-way limitations, presences of bridges, drainage problems, and obstructions.

   The specific severity and extent of each type of pavement distress should be examined closely. Additional field testing such as falling weight deflectometer (FWD), pavement cores, friction testing, splash and spray, and materials testing may be necessary. The extent of the additional testing may be dependent on the roadway classification. Much of this information should be contained in a pavement management system (PMS). The PMS can be in many forms including a sophisticated computer program, a relatively simple spreadsheet, or notes accumulated by maintenance personnel.

   The Iowa DOT has a program of data collection on all roads in the state and is one source of pavement condition information. The program in administered by the CTRE program at The Institute for Transportation at Iowa State University. Information can be accessed at http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/ipmp/services/. It is necessary to undertake additional effort to convert the raw data to useable information.

3. **Future Projections:** It is also important to evaluate any future changes that may be expected for each roadway section. Changes in adjacent land use or improvements to area roadways could impact the traffic volume and the vehicle mix of a roadway section. Long-range transportation planning documents should provide this information. This information is critical to understanding the service life expectancy of the existing pavement and then the subsequent preventative maintenance treatments to match that service life.