

## Environmentally friendly paving?

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INDIAN TRAIL Black is the new green in Indian Trail.

As part of their continuing effort to be environmentally friendly, Indian Trail officials moved forward with a green paving project on Park Road that they and paving contractor Boggs Inc. say is not only better for the Earth, but for the budget as well.

"This process is truly a win-win for the asphalt industry and our customers when we can utilize environmentally friendly technology at a significant cost savings to our customers," said Drew Boggs with the Boggs Group.

The new process is called "warm-mix," instead of the traditional "hot-mix," and allows the asphalt to be heated at temperatures up to 100 degrees lower than before.

Not everyone, however, has bought into the new process. Some N.C. Department of Transportation officials say the cooler process weakens the structural integrity of the road.

Boggs Paving gets much of its equipment from Chattanooga, Tenn.-based Astec Industries, a producer of machines for every aspect of road building. Company executives helped Boggs give a demonstration and said that more than 1 million tons of asphalt have been laid on 120 systems worldwide; the Indian Trail project is the first in Union County or the greater Charlotte area.

Astec touts the process as having little or no downside. "So far we have found none," said Astec's Malcolm Swanson. He predicted that in one year, 50 percent of all new road projects would use the warm-mix method.

Cooler processing keeps more of the chemical makeup in the asphalt, meaning that not only will fewer chemicals evaporate into the atmosphere, but roads will be stronger because more of the chemical compounds are retained in the mix. It will also lower costs by using 11 percent less fuel for heat.

The new process also makes use of recycled asphalt, which members of the Astec team said is just as sturdy as making new asphalt from rocks.

Boggs Paving hosted a demonstration in Indian Trail. Town officials looked on as a steamroller pounded a new surface on Park Road and left no smoke behind.

Joe Tolan works in Indian Trail's Engineering Department and previously worked for the New York Department of Transportation. He said the new mixing method was not just something beneficial for the town, but "something for the entire industry."

N.C. Department of Transportation officials also attended, but were not as impressed.

Steve McAllister pointed a temperature-gauging device at the freshly laid asphalt; it read 193 degrees. He said normally the asphalt would be between 275 and 305 degrees.

Although he noted that the lower temperatures were a benefit to the environment, he and other DOT officials said it made the road weaker. He grabbed a stone projected from the steamroller and easily crushed it under his boot to

emphasize his point. "Would you want to drive 80,000 pounds over that?" he asked.

Other officials said the warm-mix might be strong enough for side roads such as Park Road in Indian Trail, but said the process was likely still a long shot to be used on major roads such as the proposed Monroe bypass, or Interstate 485.

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