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MISSOULA PURCHASES ASPHALT RECYCLER

Innovation will benefit Missoula streets

When Mayor John Engen told Street Superintendent Brian Hensel last spring that he wanted extraordinary measures to repair the city's streets after the rough winter, Hensel became an engineer of innovation.

That led to the Missoula City Council's approval Monday night of the purchase of the City's newest workhorse, a PT3000 asphalt recycler. It will enable Hensel and his crews to start patching potholes earlier in the spring and to use hot asphalt for better staying power. And it's green: the recycler reuses chunks of asphalt and asphalt millings, three tons at a time, that formerly were treated as waste or surplus material.

Last spring, Hensel borrowed the City of Bozeman's asphalt recycler to get an early start on worse-than-usual potholes following a winter full of freeze-thaw cycles and lots of snow and ice. The asphalt plants had yet to open for the season. The cold-patch material used in early spring wasn't holding well enough as freezing and thawing continued.

The recycler worked. The hot mix it produces in about 20 minutes adheres to potholes and seals out moisture. It worked so well that Hensel researched asphalt recyclers and suggested a purchase; Mayor Engen, Chief Administrative Officer Bruce Bender and Public Works Director Steve King agreed. The request made it to the City Council, and its members approved the \$188,829 purchase Monday evening. The recycler, made by Pavement Technologies, will arrive in 12 to 14 weeks.

"What's really exciting about it for us is it will enable me to make asphalt year-round for the patch truck and be able to patch potholes all year long," Hensel said. "And we'll also be able to go out and dig sumps and patch them back ourselves."

Sumps serve to drain water from streets. When they've needed to be dug up for repairs in winter, Hensel's crews have had to wait until the asphalt plants open in spring so the areas around them could be patched after the work.

This year, the loaner recycler was a part of the work Street Maintenance Division crews did in response to Mayor Engen's request for an aggressive approach to the damage of winter. They have filled 602 potholes since May and chip-sealed, milled and/or overlaid 12.75 miles of streets. These maintenance practices help prevent and mitigate future damage by severe weather.

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