



## **RECYCLING OF ASPHALT PAVEMENT BACKGROUND**

Much has changed since the nation's first Earth Day in April 1970. Americans are now recycling 28 percent of products in the municipal solid waste stream. For some industrial products, the recycling rate is much higher, and reclaimed asphalt pavement leads all at 80 percent. In fact, the hot mix asphalt industry recycles approximately twice the tonnage of asphalt pavement as the amount of recycled paper, glass, plastic and aluminum combined.

### *How it works*

The Federal Highway Administration estimates that 91 million metric tons (100.1 million tons) of asphalt pavement are scraped or “milled” off roads during resurfacing and widening projects each year. Of that, 73 million metric tons (80.3 million tons) are reclaimed and reused as part of the nation's roads, roadbeds, shoulders and embankments. For road surfaces, studies have determined that mixes containing 10 percent to 25 percent of reclaimed asphalt pavement have performed well in numerous states. Even higher percentages have been used successfully in lower layers.

Additionally, engineers have determined that that the asphalt pavement industry can make economical use of other waste products – such as old tires, factory-reject roofing shingles, slag aggregate from steel production and sand from metal-casting foundries – to make asphalt pavement.

### *Major advantages*

Recycling asphalt pavement makes both environmental and economic sense. Reclaimed asphalt pavement constitutes a “treasure trove” of pre-processed road-building materials. The use of recycled asphalt pavement has grown widely, reducing the use of virgin materials and helping to preserve landfill space. Highway agencies and taxpayers benefit because recycling stretches tax dollars, allowing more roads to be kept in better condition.