

OPTIMAL SELECTION OF
FLEXIBLE PAVEMENT COMPONENTS

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PURDUE UNIVERSITY
LAFAYETTE INDIANA

by

S. S. HEJAL,
T. R. BUICK
and
J. C. OPPENLANDER

OPTIMAL SELECTION OF FLEXIBLE PAVEMENT COMPONENTS

To: G. A. Leonard, Director
Joint Highway Research Project

From: H. L. Michael, Associate Director
Joint Highway Research Project

May 9, 1968

Project No: C-36-52G

File No: 6-20-7

The attached report entitled "Optimal Selection of Flexible Pavement Components" has been prepared by Messrs. S. S. Hejal, T. B. Buick, and J. C. Oppenlander of our staff. The purpose of this systems analysis was to develop a rational method for the optimal selection of flexible pavement components. Minimum-cost thicknesses are determined for flexible pavements to satisfy the demands of traffic and environment on the system of pavement structure and soil support.

In total, 31,680 optimal flexible pavements were designed for highway construction conditions indicative of Indiana. Each flexible pavement section fulfills the design objectives for the least total cost.

The paper is presented to the Board for information.

Respectfully submitted,

Harold L. Michael
Harold L. Michael
Associate Director

HLM:nf

Attachment

Copy:	F. L. Ashbaucher	R. H. Harrell	C. F. Scholer
	W. L. Dolch	J. A. Havers	M. B. Scott
	W. H. Goetz	V. E. Harvey	W. T. Spencer
	W. L. Grecco	J. P. McLaughlin	H. R. J. Walsh
	G. K. Hallock	F. B. Mendenhall	K. B. Woods
	M. E. Farr	R. D. Miles	E. J. Yoder
		J. C. Oppenlander	

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**Purdue University
Lafayette, Indiana**

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INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of highway pavement design is to provide an acceptable roadway surface that can withstand the deteriorating effects of traffic and environment for the service life of the facility. In addition, the pavement structure must adequately serve the demands of the road users at an acceptable level of performance. A properly designed, constructed, and maintained pavement is a major factor in providing economical, efficient, safe, convenient, and comfortable highway travel. This goal is an integral part of the total highway transportation program.

Although several design techniques are available for determining reasonable thicknesses of flexible pavements to satisfy the specified design parameters, no present method explicitly considers an optimization of flexible pavement components to minimize the total cost of the pavement system. Of course, this cost minimization must be realized within the boundary constraints imposed by the selected values of the design parameters. The purpose of this systems analysis was to develop a rational method for the optimal selection of flexible pavement components.

The objective of flexible pavement design in this investigation is to select the thicknesses of the various pavement components so that the total pavement cost is minimized within the limitations of the various design parameters for the procedure used by the Indiana State Highway Commission. Minimum-cost thicknesses are determined for flexible

pavements to satisfy the demands of traffic and environment on the system of pavement structure and soil support. Therefore, this technique affords a practical and economical solution to the problem of designing the thicknesses of flexible pavements. This approach to design embodies the essence of sound engineering.

governments to satisfy the demands of traffic and environment in the
system of payment structure and toll support. Therefore, this book
provides a practical and economical solution to the problem of
designing the structure of tolls in highways. This approach to
design achieves the success of toll engineering.



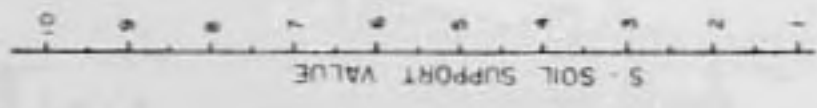
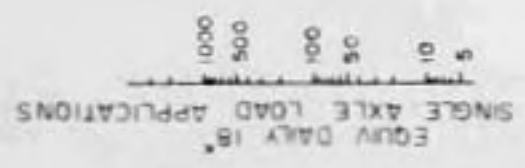
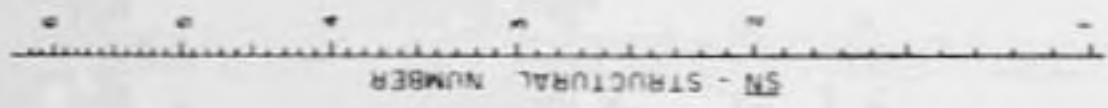
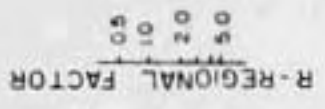
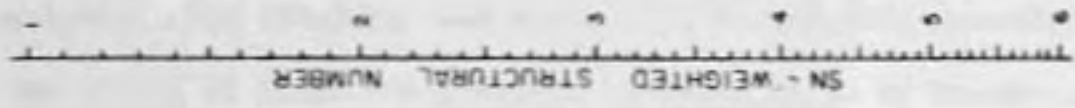
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CONCEPTUAL MODEL

A flexible pavement distributes the traffic loads through a system of pavement components to the subgrade. These pavement layers are generally identified as surface, base, and subbase. Several different thickness combinations of the materials comprising the various components may adequately satisfy the structural design of the highway pavement. However, all satisfactory thickness arrangements may not provide an economical solution to the engineering problem of pavement design. In general, only one pavement structure is an optimal selection of the flexible pavement components for the designated design conditions.

The Indiana State Highway Commission predicates the total thickness of a flexible pavement on an estimated number of equivalent 18-kip single-axle load repetitions and on an appropriate measure of the soil support afforded by the subgrade. The combined effect of traffic loadings and soil support is denoted as a structural number (SN) according to the interim design guide of the American Association of State Highway Officials for flexible pavements. A nomograph for determining structural numbers is presented as Figure 1 for average terminal serviceabilities. Pavement component thicknesses are then selected to reproduce the specified structural number by a linear combination of layer thickness times its coefficient of relative strength. A minimum pavement thickness is equal to the summation of the component thicknesses.

Consideration of significant environmental factors, such as depth of frost penetration, may provide another control on the selection of a minimum pavement thickness. Several design procedures specify a minimum pavement thickness (T_{\min}) to account for various influencing environmental



**DESIGN CHART
FLEXIBLE PAVEMENTS**

20 YEAR
TRAFFIC ANALYSIS
P * 2.0

Figure 1 AASHO Flexible Design Chart

conditions. The greater minimum thickness value becomes the design requirement.

In a real sense, the minimum thicknesses represent design constraints and not design objectives. The design objective is to produce a flexible pavement system at the least total cost within the specified boundary conditions. The in-place unit costs of the component materials depend on the locale in which the flexible pavement is to be constructed. In addition to the traffic loading, soil support, and environment constraints, practical limitations on layer thicknesses are evident in highway construction practices.

DESIGN MODEL

The optimal selection of flexible pavement components is depicted by the following objective function:

$$\text{min. } S = \left[\frac{C_1 D_1}{12 \times 2000} \right] d_1 + \left[\frac{C_2 D_2}{12 \times 2000} \right] d_2 + \left[\frac{C_3 D_3}{12 \times 2000} \right] d_3 + \left[\frac{C_4}{12 \times 27} \right] d_4$$

where S = total cost of pavement system (dollars per square foot),

C_i = unit cost of layer 'i' (dollars per ton for layers 1, 2, and 3 and dollars per cubic yard for layer 4),

D_i = density of layer 'i' (pounds per cubic foot),

d_i = thickness of layer 'i' (inches), and

i = 1 for bituminous surface, 2 for bituminous base, 3 for compacted aggregate base, and 4 for granular subbase.

Thus, the objective of this optimal selection of flexible pavement components is to minimize the total cost of the pavement system.

To quantify the boundary conditions to which the optimal selection of the thicknesses of the flexible pavement components is subject, the following constraint equations are necessary to complete the realism of this design model.

1. The selection of layer thicknesses must satisfy the structural number requirement.

$$a_1 d_1 + a_2 d_2 + a_3 d_3 + a_4 d_4 \geq SN$$

where a_i = coefficient of relative strength of layer 'i' and

SN = structural number for design.

2. The total thickness of the flexible pavement must be least equal to the minimum thickness which is required by an influencing environmental consideration.

$$d_1 + d_2 + d_3 + d_4 \geq T_{\min}$$

where T_{\min} = total minimum thickness of flexible pavement to satisfy environmental conditions.

The remaining constraining equations are required to account for the physical limitations inherent in the construction of the various layers of a flexible pavement. The following five relationships complete the mathematical representation of the concept for the optimal selection of flexible pavement components.

3. The bituminous surface course of a primary highway is at least 3.0 in. in thickness.

$$d_1 \geq 3.0$$

4. If a bituminous base is selected for the pavement system, the minimum thickness is 3.0 in.

$$d_2 = 0 \text{ or } \geq 3.0$$

5. If a compacted aggregate base is included in the flexible pavement, a minimum thickness of 6.0 in. is necessary for construction purposes.

$$d_3 = 0 \text{ or } \geq 6.0$$

6. If a granular subbase is specified from the optimal selection, at least a 4.0-in. layer is required.

$$d_4 = 0 \text{ or } \geq 4.0$$

7. Because rutting and shoving of the pavement surface may result under high load repetitions for excessive thicknesses of bituminous mixtures, the maximum thickness of bituminous layers is 10.0 in.

$$d_1 + d_2 \leq 10.0$$

In summary, the optimal selection of flexible pavement components is predicated on determining that minimum-cost combination of layer thicknesses which satisfy the real and practical constraining conditions. The selection of actual in-place construction costs enhances the mathematical representation of the flexible pavement design process and provides further economies in the highway construction industry.

SOLUTION

The final step in determining the optimal selection of flexible pavement components was to obtain a solution to the design model. This solution optimizes the objective function and is subject to the set of constraining situations. The optimization process was performed in two stages. In the first phase, the following five separate arrangements of flexible pavement components were optimized by a linear programming algorithm.

1. Bituminous surface, bituminous base, and compacted aggregate base;
2. Bituminous surface and compacted aggregate base;
3. Bituminous surface, bituminous base, and granular subbase;
4. Bituminous surface, compacted aggregate base, and granular subbase; and
5. Bituminous surface, bituminous base, compacted aggregate base, and granular subbase.

The other phase of the solution involved the selection of that pavement-component arrangement which minimizes the total cost for the selected unit costs of the pavement materials. This final solution represents the global optimum, and no better solution exists for the specified pavement design and material cost parameters.

To develop optimal flexible pavement designs for primary highways in the State of Indiana, the pavement materials shown in Table 1 were incorporated in the design model. The respective coefficients of relative strength and in-place densities are indicated in this table for the selected bituminous surface, bituminous base, compacted aggregate base,

Table 1

PAVEMENT MATERIAL SPECIFICATIONS

Material Notation	Material Description	Coefficient of Relative Strength, a_1	Density, D_1 (lb/cu ft)
d_1	Bituminous surface	0.40	140
d_2	Bituminous base	0.24	130
d_3	Compacted aggregate base	0.14	135
d_4	Granular subbase	0.08	---

and granular subbase. The pavement materials conform to the specifications of the Indiana State Highway Commission. The appropriate unit cost values for the materials in-place are summarized in Table 2. The cost ranges were selected to be representative of construction conditions in Indiana. The range and incremental values of cost specified in Table 2 result in 192 cost arrangements for the four pavement materials.

The optimal selection of flexible pavement components was developed for 15 structural numbers and 11 minimum total thicknesses. The structural numbers range from 2.50 to 6.00 in increments of 0.25, and the minimum total thicknesses represent values from 13.0 to 23.0 in. in 1.0-in. increments. Thus, 31,680 optimal flexible pavements were designed for highway construction conditions indicative of Indiana. Six sample design tables are presented in the Appendix to illustrate the results for the optimal selection of flexible pavement components. The thickness requirements for the four layers of a flexible pavement are specified for each combination of structural number, minimum total thickness, and unit costs of pavement materials. Each flexible pavement section fulfills the design objectives for the least total cost.

Table 2
UNIT MATERIAL COSTS

Material Notation	Unit Cost Range	Unit Cost Increment
d_1	8.00 - 11.00, \$/ton	1.00, \$/ton
d_2	5.00 - 8.00, \$/ton	1.00, \$/ton
d_3	3.00 - 5.00, \$/ton	1.00, \$/ton
d_4	3.00 - 6.00, \$/cu yd	1.00, \$/cu yd

APPENDIX

SAMPLE DESIGN TABLES

for

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