

Annual Asphalt Road Resurfacing in Spokane, Washington

The City of Spokane conducts approximately 10 lane miles of asphalt road resurfacing annually through its grind and overlay program, representing a significant investment in maintaining the city's extensive 2,200 lane mile street network^{[1][2]}. This resurfacing effort, primarily executed by the Street Maintenance Division, focuses on extending the life of existing pavement through strategic rehabilitation techniques that remove deteriorated surface layers and replace them with fresh asphalt^[1]. The city's approach has evolved over the past decade, with resurfacing capacity increasing from approximately 6 lane miles per year in 2015 to the current 10 lane miles annually, reflecting enhanced funding mechanisms and improved operational efficiency^{[1][3]}.

Current Resurfacing Operations and Methodology

The City of Spokane's street maintenance operations center around a systematic approach to asphalt resurfacing that prioritizes both efficiency and long-term pavement preservation. The Street Maintenance Division currently performs approximately 10 lane miles of grind and overlay work annually, which represents the primary method for asphalt road resurfacing within city limits^[1]. This grind and overlay process, also known as milling and resurfacing, involves a comprehensive four-step rehabilitation technique that has proven both cost-effective and minimally disruptive compared to complete road reconstruction^[4].

The grind and overlay methodology begins with the careful removal or lowering of manholes, storm water structures, and sewer infrastructure to protect these elements during the grinding process^[4].

Subsequently, specialized equipment mills away the top layer of existing asphalt, creating a smooth foundation surface for new pavement application^[4]. The third phase involves raising and realigning the previously lowered infrastructure components to match the new road elevation, followed by the final application of fresh asphalt overlay that restores structural integrity and provides an enhanced driving surface^[4].

This systematic approach allows the city to address pavement deterioration effectively while maintaining traffic flow and minimizing construction-related disruptions to residents and businesses. The 10 lane miles of annual resurfacing represents a substantial commitment to infrastructure maintenance, particularly when considering the scale of Spokane's total street network of 2,200 lane miles^{[1][2]}.

Historical Trends and Capacity Development

Spokane's asphalt resurfacing capacity has demonstrated steady growth over the past decade, reflecting both increased funding availability and operational improvements within the Street Maintenance Division. Historical data from the city's 2015-2020 Six Year Comprehensive Street Program indicates that the department was performing approximately 6 lane miles of grind and overlay work annually during that period, with an established goal to increase this quantity to 8 lane miles per year^[3]. The current achievement of 10 lane miles annually represents a significant improvement beyond even these aspirational targets.

The evolution in resurfacing capacity can be attributed to several factors, including enhanced funding mechanisms established through voter-approved measures and improved coordination with utility infrastructure projects. The city's approach has shifted toward integrated project planning, where street resurfacing is coordinated with underground utility work to maximize efficiency and minimize repeated excavation of the same roadway sections^[5]. This strategic integration has allowed the Street Maintenance Division to accomplish more comprehensive rehabilitation projects within available funding constraints.

Special resurfacing initiatives have supplemented the regular annual program during periods of increased need or available funding. For example, the Fix-It-Fest 2017 initiative included 8.2 miles of new repair projects and 5.2 miles of planned projects, demonstrating the city's ability to scale up operations when circumstances warrant additional investment in road infrastructure^[6]. These surge capacity efforts have provided valuable experience in managing larger-scale resurfacing operations while maintaining quality standards.

Funding and Resource Allocation

The financial framework supporting Spokane's annual asphalt resurfacing program reflects a complex blend of local, state, and federal funding sources that enable the consistent 10 lane miles of annual grind and overlay work. The city's Transportation Benefit District, established in 2010, provides crucial funding through a \$20 vehicle license tab fee that generates approximately \$2.5 million annually for street maintenance and pedestrian improvement projects^[7]. This dedicated funding source has proven instrumental in maintaining consistent resurfacing operations year over year.

Voter-approved street levy measures have significantly enhanced the city's resurfacing capabilities, with the most recent levy generating \$5 million annually that is matched by an additional \$5 million from city utilities, creating a combined \$10 million annual budget for street improvements^[8]. These funds are strategically leveraged to secure additional state and federal grants, potentially increasing the total

available resources to \$20 million per year for comprehensive street maintenance and reconstruction projects^[8].

The cost-effectiveness of the grind and overlay approach has proven particularly valuable in maximizing the impact of available funding. The 2024 grind and overlay program, with a construction estimate of \$3.46 million, demonstrates the substantial investment required to maintain even the current 10 lane miles of annual resurfacing^[4]. This cost structure underscores the importance of strategic funding mechanisms and the city's focus on preventive maintenance approaches that extend pavement life while minimizing long-term reconstruction costs.

Regional Context and Comparative Analysis

Spokane's annual resurfacing of 10 lane miles of asphalt roads can be better understood when compared to the practices of neighboring jurisdictions and the broader regional context. Spokane County, operating as a separate entity from the City of Spokane, maintains its own asphalt overlay program that covers approximately one to two miles of road per year, focusing primarily on preservation of urban arterials within the county's jurisdiction^[9]. This more limited scope reflects the county's different responsibilities and funding mechanisms compared to the municipal street maintenance operations.

The City of Spokane Valley, another significant jurisdiction in the Spokane metropolitan area, manages approximately 450 centerline miles of paved streets, representing more than 1,000 lane miles of total pavement^[10]. The Valley's pavement management approach emphasizes maximizing available funding to extend street life by keeping good roads in good condition, with annual costs for street maintenance and preservation estimated at approximately \$16 million per year to maintain current conditions^[11]. However, the Valley's dedicated funding sources have historically provided only about \$8 million per year, representing approximately 50% of the total program cost needed^[11].

The scale and consistency of Spokane's 10 lane miles of annual resurfacing reflects a relatively mature and well-funded street maintenance program compared to many municipalities of similar size. The city's ability to maintain this level of resurfacing activity year over year demonstrates both effective long-term planning and successful implementation of sustainable funding mechanisms that support ongoing infrastructure maintenance needs.

Conclusion

The City of Spokane's annual resurfacing of approximately 10 lane miles of asphalt roads represents a substantial and strategically important investment in maintaining the city's extensive 2,200 lane mile street network. This consistent level of resurfacing activity, achieved through the grind and overlay

methodology, reflects both the city's commitment to infrastructure maintenance and the successful implementation of dedicated funding mechanisms that support ongoing pavement preservation efforts. The evolution from 6 lane miles annually in 2015 to the current 10 lane miles demonstrates the city's capacity for operational improvement and strategic planning in response to community infrastructure needs.

Looking forward, the sustainability of this 10 lane mile annual resurfacing program will depend on continued public support for funding mechanisms and the city's ability to maintain operational efficiency while managing the competing demands of an aging infrastructure network. The city's integrated approach to project planning, which coordinates resurfacing work with utility improvements and other infrastructure needs, positions Spokane well to maximize the value of its annual resurfacing investments while minimizing long-term maintenance costs and community disruption.

*
**

1. <https://my.spokanecity.org/streets/maintenance/pavement-repair/>
2. <https://my.spokanecity.org/news/stories/2022/04/18/assessing-streets-goes-hi-tech/>
3. <https://static.spokanecity.org/documents/hcc/commissions/plan-commission/meeting-documents/2014/05/14/2015-2020-six-year-street-program-draft-2.pdf>
4. <https://my.spokanecity.org/projects/2024-grind-and-overlay-street-maintenance/>
5. <https://my.spokanecity.org/projects/capital-programs/streets-dashboard/20-year-arterial-street-plan/>
6. <https://www.spokanejournal.com/articles/3930-spokane-s-road-work-backlog-year-of-the-big-fix>
7. <https://my.spokanecity.org/news/stories/2013/12/23/the-road-to-repair/>
8. <https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2016/nov/02/voters-paved-the-way-for-110-miles-and-counting-of/>
9. <https://www.spokanecounty.gov/1071/Road-Maintenance-Activities>
10. <https://www.spokanevalleywa.gov/345/Street-Maintenance-Pavement-Preservation>
11. <https://www.spokanevalleywa.gov/346/Pavement-Management-Program>