

Doing the job right and the value of repeat business

By Randell C. Riley, P.E.

Over the years one observation that I have made repeatedly is that you cannot overlook the value of providing a quality product and its tendency to produce repeat business. Do jobs right the first time and folks will look to you again for future projects. Being able to answer their questions and help solve problems along the way is a key factor in making this all possible. For a case study in this approach let's take a look at what is occurring in Macomb, Illinois.

It all started from a project on Adams Street that had problems with busses stopping on the hill and shoving the asphalt. That single small project in 2003 was the beginning of a market, and all of the concrete is being supplied by local ready mix concrete producers. Can you do the same? Of course you can! All IRMCA members benefit from a similar effort.

Working through various issues with local engineers, Public Works folks, and contractors is actually quite easy. You deal with the problems on the fly, and concrete, particularly the fiber reinforced variety, is able to settle into place and provide the level of service needed for the pavement. And it will last longer than anything offered by the other guys!

Currently there are two Macomb projects in various stages of construction that have their roots in projects and relationships built a number of years ago.

The first on Carroll Street, under construction by IRMCA member Lavadiere Construction, Inc., is a 4-inch plus structural fiber reinforced concrete section with joints on a four-foot by four-foot joint spacing in a residential area. It is built as a partial overlay/inlay to deal with grades and maintain drainage in the area, in part by placement of new curb and gutter.

A completed section of Carroll Street in Macomb, IL.

The pavement, like that of most older communities after milling to prepare the surface, has a variable base condition with everything from

exposed old brick to areas of asphalt over brick and includes the occasional concrete utility repair. In this market of pavement rehabilitation, what is on the plans from fifty years ago is rarely what you encounter. It requires some coring for evaluation followed by a plan recognizing that surprises will happen. Talking and communicating onsite with the local folks is critical to ensuring success until they too learn that dealing with those surprises is rarely difficult.

If you run into an unexpected bad area during preparation, excavate it out, recompact the base using new stone if needed, and make the concrete as thick as the total base plus overlay. If you take care to make sure that the joints in the overlay approximate that of the underlying area as close as practical, it just works. It's not that hard, but until folks learn this is doable with concrete, it takes a while.

Too many times everything grinds to a halt while the uninitiated want to go drag out the Illinois Department of Transportation design manual, put in a new base and a new concrete slab "in accordance with" IDOT standards (See "The IDOT Influence...", IRMCA News, Spring 2012) and drive up the cost and complicate the project unnecessarily. This is rehab, not new construction!

A section of North Bower Road.

Need more proof that concrete overlays work? Just check the latest copy of the Illinois Chapter, Inc. – American Concrete Pavement Association/Illinois Ready Mixed Concrete Association [project database](#) of concrete overlays. You too can benefit by doing the job right to build a repeat business!

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