

## **Asphalt Wins in Alternate Bid Project but Pavement Still Goes to Concrete**

Sometimes, even when you win, you lose.

Because of the volatility of the construction materials market, the Ohio Department of Transportation, ODOT, chose to experiment with alternate bids for pavement type on some major projects. On these projects, contractors were required to submit bids for both the asphalt and concrete pavement alternative designs. This is different than in the past, when ODOT sometimes solicited “optional” bids; that is, contractors could submit a bid for either the asphalt or concrete at their option. These projects also did not include ODOT’s customary asphalt price adjustment provision.

One of these alternate bid contracts was the Lake County, SR 2 – 3.32 project bid January 28, 2009. The bidding results on this project were the subject of an article in the Cleveland Plain Dealer on April 25, 2009 that was widely noted by national news services.

On the Lake SR 2 project the low asphalt pavement bid was \$27, 018,532.14. The low concrete pavement bid was \$27, 449,512.39. These amounts include all the bid items of work that differed because of the pavement type and are based on an analysis of all of the bids received for the project.

But, even though there was an asphalt pavement bid that was \$430,000 less, the project was awarded to the contractor with the concrete alternate; because his total project bid was lower overall. Even with the alternate bid items, ODOT is still obligated to take the lowest total project bid. In other words, the successful bidder was determined by lower prices for work other than the pavement.

So, even with the recent volatility in petroleum and asphalt commodity prices, asphalt pavement remains an economical choice. When you consider the long life and low cost of maintenance of a deep asphalt base pavement, the choice looks even better.