Returning Roads to Gravel – Dealing with Public Reaction

Ken Skorseth
Program Manager - SDLTAP
Experience while managing Deuel Co Hwy Dept in 1980s.
Two sections of asphalt surface were returned to gravel

3 mile section
Classification: Rural Local Road
ADT: 55 (Current Estimate)
Surface today: Gravel

1.5 mile section
Classification: Rural Major Collector
ADT: 150 (Current Estimate)
Surface today: Pavement.
Problems that led to decision

- Gravel base was marginal in quality and thickness.
- Lignin Sulfonate treatment in base inhibited prime coat penetration during blotter construction. Blotter surface began to delaminate.
- Extent and severity of potholes and breakup was very high.
Dealing with Public Reaction

- Contact was made with residents living on the road to explain decision prior to “depaving”.
- Initial reaction was very negative by one resident, neutral by two others.
- Honest assessment by County: will be replaced with blotter surfacing at such time as County can afford it. (it won’t be in near future)
Lessons Learned:

- Use the best surface gravel available to get a tightly bound and smooth surface.
- Was more cost effective to hire a recycling machine than to rip and pulverize blotter with disk or sheepfoot roller.
- Get the job done quickly.
Which surface is worse???
Use the best gravel you can find.
This will get you in trouble!
Summary:

- Be honest & forthright with residents.
- It’s a bitter pill to swallow for local residents – some will object no matter how logical the decision may be.
- But, there was some positive comment and appreciation for a smooth driving surface.