

Monroe Evening News

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Industry experts are interested in using part of deteriorated Samaria Rd. for a test that might reveal a long-term solution for the county highway.

Bucky Brooks, a Monroe resident who recently was named president of the Asphalt Emulsion Manufacturers Association and is a sales manager for Asphalt Materials Inc. of Oregon, Ohio, said he plans to offer an idea to the Monroe County Road Commission in the weeks ahead.

"It'll give you an idea of what could be done to fix the road," he told The Evening News.

Mr. Brooks said discussions are in the preliminary stage, but the asphalt firm would be willing to conduct the experiment for free. It's not sure how large a section might be involved, where it would be located or how long the test would last.

Mr. Brooks worked for the Monroe Department of Public Services for more than a dozen years before joining the Monroe County Road Commission, where he spent three years as director of operations.

He said various road agencies are looking more at "pavement preservation" techniques to stretch dollars rather than replacing or repaving roads. Pavement preservation includes chip-sealing, milling, micro-surfacing, crack-filling and other techniques to extend the life of the road, rather than doing a full repaving.

He is a member of the Michigan Road Preservation Association and recently was appointed to a two-year term on the board of the Foundation for Pavement Presentation, an organization that advocates pavement preservation.

Part of the problem in repairing roads is that both asphalt and concrete costs have risen from years past. Asphalt prices are tied to oil costs, and cement production is linked to natural gas and other forms of energy used in making it.

As an example, he said, prior to 2006, asphalt prices were \$20 to \$25 a ton. Since then, the price has ranged from \$40 to \$90 a ton, meaning road repair dollars don't go as far as they once did.

"Twenty-one years ago, we didn't have money to do what was needed. We sure don't have enough now," he said.

He said the roads this year are particularly bad because of the harsh winter and alternating periods of cold and wet weather. But he rejects the notion that Monroe County roads are the worst around.

"Monroe isn't alone in that," he said. "I travel all over Ohio, Indiana and Michigan, and the roads everywhere are as bad as I've seen them in a long time."