



Pavement Preservation

Public Education Campaign Strategy

Introduction/Overview

Public education essential to advance pavement preservation

In order to change public thinking about the right strategy for maintaining roads and bridges throughout the U.S., pavement preservation stakeholders need to launch and sustain regular communication with national, state and local media and generate news coverage of the issue. **An issue of such magnitude and national importance can gain traction only through aggressive and persistent contact with reporters and editors who cover transportation infrastructure and business issues.** The media cannot be counted on to discover the story on their own or to recognize its relevance. The agency and industry needs to be the catalyst for media attention.

The fact that an issue makes headlines amidst so many other pressing national and state issues, captures the public's attention more effectively than even advertising can. Advertising alone would not carry the same weight since it lacks third-party validation, and it would cost millions to obtain the same media space.

Planning the campaign

Phase I -- Preparation, planning, development of campaign materials

- Develop national media strategy
- Develop media campaign template for states
- Develop key messages, media newsroom and campaign materials
- Prepare national level spokespeople

Phase II – National campaign launch focusing on major national media

- Generate news coverage/supportive editorials in national print and broadcast media outlets (*Wall Street Journal, New York Times, National Public Radio, CNN, USA Today*)

Phase III – Public education at the regional level

- Prepare regional level spokespeople
- Generate news coverage/supportive editorials in major regional/state media across the US
- Recruit organization coalition allies in each region/state and activate their communication channels

Competing for media attention

Pavement Preservation will not be an easy media sell, considering the range of other compelling issues on the media's radar. Despite its importance to the national and local economies, preserving our infrastructure will compete with other "crisis" issues, including the struggling national economy and our failing health care and education systems, just to name a few. The media must be convinced that our crumbling highway infrastructure warrants the same attention and has as much impact on the economy.

Becoming the authority on pavement preservation

In order for a media campaign on pavement preservation to succeed, interested stakeholders must speak with a unified voice, and become the **issue authority** in the eyes of the media. Ideally, to avoid confusion, the media needs to hear from a single entity, which represents all major stakeholders.

1. NCPP will coordinate the distribution of information to regions through two websites, www.tsp2.org and www.pavementpreservation.org. Information will first be vetted through several interested stakeholders, including the AASHTO TSP•2 pavement preservation partnerships, FHWA, and FP2, Inc. Vetting will ensure credible and factual information is released to the media.
2. Spokespersons must convey a simple, clear message that is backed up by facts and data and communicated consistently and repeatedly for the duration of the campaign. Although the message is multilayered and complex, it must be broken into general and more specific segments depending on the audience and communication channel. A few spokespersons will be trained to effectively deal with addressing the media.

Campaign Goals

1. **Change the reactive road repair mindset** to a more proactive pavement preservation policy throughout the U.S., at all levels of transportation decision-making.
2. **Create greater understanding among all target audiences of the benefits of pavement preservation** in terms of U.S. economic competitiveness, state and local cost savings, employment opportunities, improved public safety and environmental sustainability.
3. **Elevate pavement preservation to a top 10 issue** for media coverage across the country.
4. **Turn media awareness into calls for action** and change of policy at national, state and local levels.
5. **Create greater accountability among public officials** for more advanced transportation infrastructure policy. Hold elected officials accountable for outdated and backward transportation policy at all levels.
6. Make the need for more advanced transportation infrastructure policy a **national campaign issue for 2012**.

Media Strategy

Major objectives

In order to achieve a nationwide shift in policy, the stakeholders must adopt a long-range strategy, based on four major objectives:

1. **Arming selected spokespersons** with a clear message and providing them with the tools and materials to make them effective on the issue.
2. **Engaging the media** on the issue and promoting ongoing news coverage, beginning with national media and working outward to major media in every region and state.
3. **Educating other influential organizations and political candidates** looking for campaign issues for the 2012 election cycle.
4. **Educating the public** through media coverage and encouraging citizens to hold public officials accountable for more prudent infrastructure policies.

Media Launch Timetable

Because media attention across the country is easier to obtain once national media have covered a story, **a two-step media strategy is needed to achieve the objectives.**

1. **A national release of a “white paper” or report** on the near-crisis state of transportation infrastructure across the U.S. The report can be based on NCPP’s already published book “***At the Crossroads***” updated with the most recent data available.

The national release should not occur until all stakeholders have been informed of the campaign and provided with a campaign template and materials.

Consider releasing the report at the national conference in Nashville in August 2012. (**Media targets:** *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, major television news networks, National Public Radio, etc.)

2. Following national news coverage of the white paper release, launch an ongoing **regional-level campaign** with data specific to each region.

Target Audiences

Stakeholders/Potential Allies

Interested partners and affiliates

- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Smart Growth America
- Taxpayers for Common Sense
- American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)

State transportation agency administrators

National and statewide business associations

- Chambers of commerce
- Small business associations
- Associations of counties
- Associations of townships
- Associations of municipalities/towns/parishes, etc.
- Manufacturing and trucking associations

Law enforcement associations

Car insurance associations (AAA)

Transportation engineers/planners

Media

Business editors/reporters

Editorial page editors

Broadcast news directors/assignment editors (TV/radio)

Relevant trade publications

Public officials/Candidates/Activists

Candidates for president 2012

Candidates for other major public offices

Local and state public officials

Local community advocates and activists

Potential Opposition/Messaging Opportunities

Groups devoted to reconstruction or major rehabilitation will likely try to negate the pavement preservation message. Such groups make their money from reconstruction and major rehabilitation, not preservation, and have a vested interest in retaining the status quo and the more frequent need for expensive reconstruction. Spokespeople and stakeholders need to be aware of the opposition's message and be prepared to respond. **When opposition groups speak out, it creates media opportunities to promote the pavement preservation message.**

Key Messages

General

Our nation's public road systems are reaching crisis stage, with serious deterioration and funding problems due to ill-advised policies that are primarily reactive, rather than proactive. More than half of US major roads are in "fair" or "poor" condition as of 2008, according to FHWA.

Our transportation infrastructure is at serious risk and must be protected and maintained for the economic strength of our country, individual states and local municipalities.

State and local budgets are being bankrupted and roads and bridges are being debilitated. Ruinous short term, "worst first" policies need to be replaced with sustaining long-term approaches involving asset management and pavement preservation.

Transportation infrastructure maintenance has always been an afterthought, rather than a planned budgeted expense. Inattention to preservation has skyrocketed the need for reconstruction.

A Pavement Preservation program consists of three components: preventive maintenance, minor rehabilitation (non structural) and some routine maintenance activities.

Sub-Messages

Cost savings/Budget relief – Pavement preservation stretches the transportation infrastructure budget and extends the remaining service life of roads and bridges.

Economic competitiveness – Preserving the highway system is vital to our (country's/ state's/city's) future. Commerce depends on a viable infrastructure. Extending the life of good roads is the most cost-effective way to save America's highways.

Safety – Proper preservation treatments create safer roads and reduce accidents.

Employment – Taking a proactive preservation approach to sustaining our infrastructure creates more employment in the road construction industry than does the reactive "worst first" approach.

Sustainability/Conservation – A proactive preservation approach causes less environmental destruction, fewer CO₂ emissions and significantly less waste of non-renewable resources.

Traffic Congestion – Motorists experience far less loss of time and frustration due to road construction. A preservation approach is significantly less disruptive to the flow of commerce and commuters.

Media Campaign Resources for Regions/States

(Following is a list of resources available to coalition members who want to take an active role in the media campaign.)

1. National Campaign Strategy
2. Action Plan for Media Coverage
3. Spokesperson Training Guide
4. Spokesperson Talking Points/Key Messages
5. Media Fact Sheet
6. News release template
7. Generic oped (opinion column)
8. Letter to the Editor template
9. Brochure (*downloadable pdf*)
10. Generic article for business/trade publications
11. Business Group Presentation
12. Public information video