

High Oil Prices Put Pinch on Street Repairs

by K_Guice

People already experiencing pangs of pain at pump prices, may again be feeling it as they drive down potentially bumpier roads around Bend.

Due to the increased cost of oil, Bend Public Works will have to reduce the number of roads that get repaired this year. "Essentially it is because of our suppliers. All of their costs have gone up," said Brandon Raz, the street supervisor for Bend Public Works.

"The shipping costs have gone up, the fuel prices just to deliver product have gone up with diesel over \$3," Raz said.

Even the cost of the product being used has increased dramatically. "Aggregate has gone up over \$11," Raz explained. "Last year it was \$24 a ton. This year it is \$34.95 a ton."

That same increase is being seen in the asphalt oil being used to lay pavement. "Last year the bid was for \$245 a ton for the liquid oil. This year the lowest bid was \$383," he said.

What that boils down to is less paving across the city of Bend. "We have a set budget that we use to bid our overlays every year," Raz said. "With those prices we just can't do as much."

Last year, the city paved 11 miles. "Our bids were low enough last year that we were able to hold some out until after the winter so we picked up another three miles," Raz reported.

That number will be cut nearly in half due to the dramatically higher cost. "We are going to blow our whole overlay budget this summer," he said. "We are at about 7.8 miles."

That has the public works department thinking creatively. "If we get a really nice mellow winter we may be able to take some of the snow plow budget and hopefully have some money to do some more paving next spring," Raz said.

Ultimately, Mother Nature will decide the immediate fate of some Bend road repairs. “Even though we are cutting back we are still fairly aggressive with our paving, especially for a city of our size,” he said.

In addition, Raz reports that the city is looking at more preventative measures as well, especially now that costs are on the rise. “Next year, we are going to look at alternatives for how we can make our pavement last longer.”

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