



# **2026 ISSA Agency Pavement Preservation & Sustainability Program Award**

## **Nominee:**

New Mexico Department of  
Transportation

## **Nominated by:**

Ergon Asphalt & Emulsions



## KEEPING THE ENTIRE STATE SAFE — AND RUNNING SMOOTHLY

### Optimizing New Mexico's Pavement Preservation With Chip Seal

Ergon Asphalt & Emulsions (Ergon A&E) would like to nominate the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) for the ISSA Agency Pavement Preservation & Sustainability Program Award. For decades, NMDOT has successfully utilized chip seal treatments as the primary tool for cost-effective, long-lasting pavement preservation.

NMDOT's tagline is "Mobility for Everyone," and that commitment to service comes through loud and clear in the team's pavement preservation program. The program serves the entire state, with a special focus on secondary and rural roads — where these cost-effective chip seal solutions make a significant impact.

Much of New Mexico's road network passes through mountainous regions. For those living along winding roads with a single lane in each direction, deteriorated pavement or gravel can be extremely dangerous — and closures may leave people stranded if there's only one way to their home.

## Optimizing New Mexico's Pavement Preservation With Chip Seal

NMDOT performs *all* its pavement preservation projects in-house. The teams responsible for these projects live in New Mexico and maintain the same roads they drive on to get to work — there's a real sense of ownership and pride in everything they do.

*“One of the biggest benefits of in-house work is being able to pass all this knowledge on to our younger team members.”*

John Romero, P.E., Operations Director – NMDOT

NMDOT's in-house team's ability to quickly bring these roadways to new life offers more durable, reliable driving surfaces that keep the community safe — without interfering heavily with their daily lives.

# The Challenge: Preserve Roads That Communities Count On – While Cutting Down on Disruptions



**Location**

New Mexico

**Road**

**Designations**

Mountainous  
secondary arterial  
roads, rural collector  
roads and local roads  
throughout all six  
NMDOT districts

**Length**

Over 1,000 miles  
statewide yearly

**Pavement Type**

Dense/open graded and  
Chip seal surfaces

**Task**

Preservation,  
maintenance and  
extension of  
roadway life

## Fast-Acting, Long-Lasting: The NMDOT Pavement Preservation Process

-  For chip seal treatments, NMDOT uses HFE-100P applied at a shot rate of 0.35 - 0.45 gallons per square yard, depending on surface conditions and aggregate gradation.
-  Immediately following the emulsion application, aggregates are applied, followed by multiple passes with pneumatic rollers to promote strong bonding and durability.
-  Generally, roads can be opened to traffic in **2 to 3 hours** following treatment. Being able to perform preservation maintenance this quickly is especially important when dealing with single-lane, mountainous rural roads.

*“We don’t want anybody sliding off the road. We try to get just enough chips, just enough oil, so it’s a good match and the rollers pack it in. That way, there’s not a lot of loose gravel on the road.”*

Bob Delp, Highway Maintenance Worker – Advanced for NMDOT District 1

# Emulsion Product Details: Chip Seal



**Emulsion Type**

HFE-100P

**Equipment  
Used**

Chip spreaders,  
distributor trucks and  
pneumatic rollers  
operated by six  
pavement  
preservation crews

**Aggregate  
Size**

3/8 inch rock

*HFE-100P was supplied by Ergon A&E.*

## Program Scope: Delivering Statewide Safety in a Timely Manner



NMDOT has always been dedicated to performing the highest quality work at the lowest cost to their communities.



NMDOT has worked closely with Ergon A&E since 2016, consistently sharing data on how their projects are progressing and what kind of solutions they need.



The teams at NMDOT are constantly on the lookout for ways to better maintain their network of roads in the safest, most unobtrusive ways possible for community members who rely on mountainous, rural roads — often only one lane in width — to go about their daily lives.



*Every project has a budget. Above all else, we want the end results to be safer, smoother roads that in turn keep our community safer. That's priority #1. But we want to be cognizant of our budgets, too, because the more efficient we are in that department, the more roads we can service.*



John Romero, P.E., Operations Director - NMDOT

## Long-Term Goals: Building a Lasting Network

-  Preserve New Mexico roads through the most cost-effective and efficient means possible
-  Keep communities well-informed of any disruptions
-  Maintain their high quality of work while striving toward new heights through training and knowledge sharing

*“ We want to keep our people safe. And we want them to know what’s going on. We always aim to keep closures to a minimum, but if we need a little extra time, we don’t want people to be surprised by that. So there are systems in place to keep the community informed, and to let them know why we’re doing what we’re doing. ”*

Rick Padilla, P.E., Director of Highway Operations – NMDOT

## The Chip Seal Quality Awards

-  The teams at NMDOT are dedicated to pavement preservation – it's a central part of the culture. To encourage effective pavement preservation techniques, the NMDOT Maintenance Division awards the Best Chip Seal Project designation each year.
-  The State Materials Engineer randomly selects chip seals projects from each district, which are then evaluated for the quality of application, coverage and durability.
-  A panel of five to ten judges – including representatives from multiple districts and the Santa Fe office – visits selected sites to assess and evaluate the projects.
-  Districts can't evaluate their own roads, and evaluators don't discuss scorecard tallies prior to the winner being selected, ensuring fairness in judging.
-  Evaluations are based on seven categories: Chip Retention, Appropriate Chip Embedment, Workmanship – Centerline Joints, Workmanship – Start and Stop Joints, Workmanship – General, Appearance and Neatness and Conservation of Resources.

## The Chip Seal Quality Awards



*“The competition is real tough. Every district does a great job with their chip seal, so if you could place top two, you’re doing really well. And to actually win the whole thing? It’s an honor. It’s good for the traveling public and for the roads, [and] for our team morale, it’s a big thing. It keeps our spirits high and gets us motivated to keep going.”*

Robert Canelo, retired Heavy Maintenance Supervisor – NMDOT District 2

Source: New Mexico Department of Transportation. (2024, June 4). District 2 – Chip Seal Crew of the Year, 2023 | NMDOT [Video]. YouTube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMA6cb88KEo>

## AN AWARD-WINNING CULTURE OF SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY

NMDOT's success is built on a culture of improvement and commitment to best practices. To reinforce this, the team has created its own awards program to encourage crews and drive excellence.

*“Winners receive jackets and, more importantly, the bragging rights of being named the best chip seal crew for that year. It’s a big deal for the state and fosters a sense of pride among the winning crews.”*

Ralph Meeks, P.E., Ergon A&E Area Sales Manager for New Mexico

## Safer Roads, Bigger Savings



With NMDOT's dedication to chip seal pavement preservation, they're able to perform high-quality preservation maintenance at a fraction of the cost of traditional milling and resurfacing. Savings are estimated to be roughly \$18,000 per lane mile.



Utilizing these chip seal treatments has a compounding effect for NMDOT's pavement preservation program — as projects are completed at a fraction of the cost, the budget is freed up to treat more of New Mexico's network. With more roads being treated, more and more drivers benefit from the safer conditions.

*“If they were to take the same amount of work they do each year — roughly 1,000 miles — and contract it out to traditional treatments, it would cost them five or six times more. “By utilizing chip seal and doing the work in-house, they keep the cost down big time.”*

Mo Rahman, P.E., Technical Marketing Manager – Pacific West for Ergon A&E

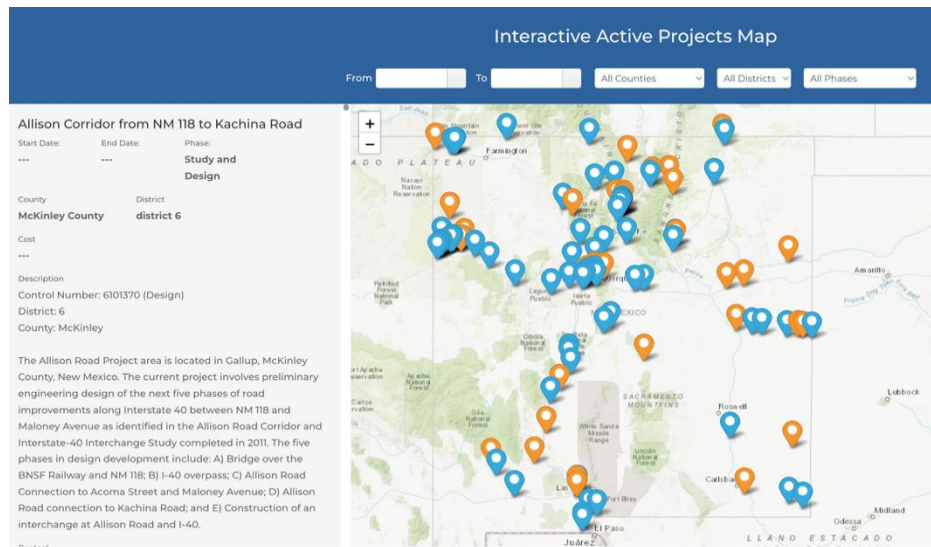
## Keeping Every Citizen in the Loop



When treating roads — especially rural and secondary roads — NMDOT aims to keep disruption to the community to a minimum.



With an easy-to-navigate website — including a public meeting calendar, a detailed letting schedule and an interactive project map — NMDOT provides a wealth of information to the public.



“

*If someone lives down a single-lane road that's going to be closed for an hour because of work, they need to know it's closing. We really pride ourselves on being transparent about upcoming projects and helping those affected to plan around them.*

”

Kristine Mihelcic, Director of Communications – NMDOT

## Making a Difference in Day-to-Day Safety

*“The NMDOT team goes above and beyond to keep our community informed. And that goes a long way, especially for people living in remote areas.”*

Mo Rahman, P.E., Technical Marketing Manager – Pacific West Region for Ergon A&E

*“We love the transparency. Up here in the mountains, it can feel like you’re a little isolated. NMDOT taking the time to let us know what’s happening and when it’s happening doesn’t go unnoticed.”*

Larry Erickson, Vice President – West Region for Ergon A&E

## Decades of Innovation and High-Quality Work

-  For nearly 40 years, NMDOT has employed ISSA chip seal pavement preservation techniques.
-  Throughout the 1980s, statewide pavement preservation practices were summarized and established at annual Paving & Transportation Conferences hosted by the University of New Mexico and The New Mexico Transportation Center.
-  In the early 2000s, NMDOT established the Chip Seal Awards, further demonstrating the department's commitment to proper chip seal application.
-  By the 2010s, NMDOT expanded its use of chip seal statewide, incorporating reclaimed asphalt pavement (RAP) aggregates and fog seal follow-ups to extend surface life and align with ISSA's evolving best practices.
-  Today, NMDOT continues to recognize district excellence through its annual Chip Seal Awards, celebrating consistent workmanship, innovation and cost-effective ISSA pavement preservation techniques across New Mexico's road network.



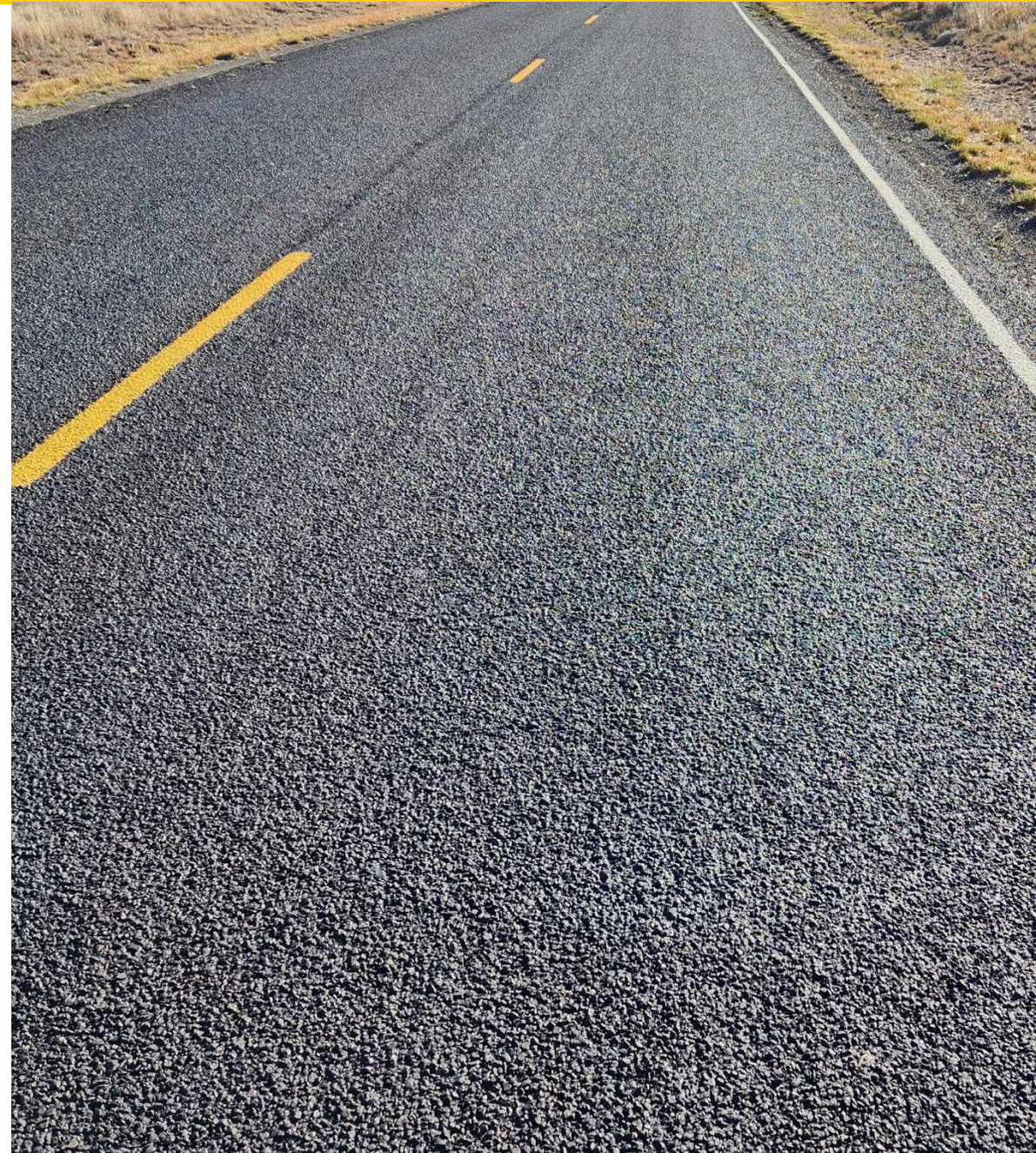






“ For nearly a decade, Ergon A&E has had the pleasure of working closely with NMDOT on their pavement preservation projects. Their passion for their program is inspiring, and we truly believe they exemplify everything a winner of the ISSA Agency Pavement Preservation & Sustainability Program Award should. NMDOT’s commitment to going the extra mile has set the standard for how an agency can serve local communities in cost-efficient, unobtrusive ways. ”

Mo Rahman, P.E., Technical Marketing Manager – Pacific West for Ergon A&E



# Contact Information

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