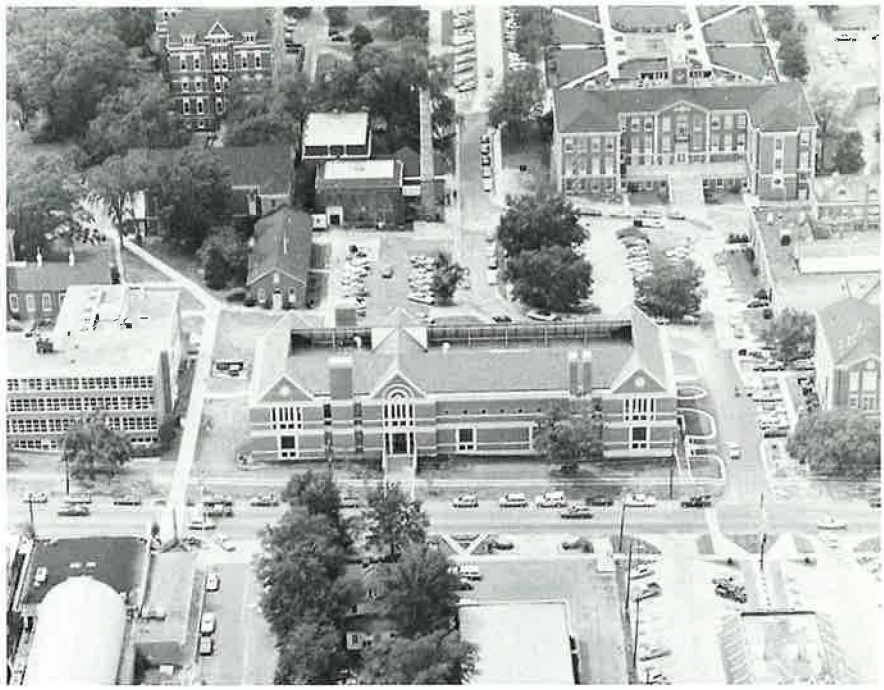
National Center for Asphalt Technology Established at Auburn University



Research and laboratory facilities for the National Center for Asphalt Technology will be located in the Harbert Engineering Center at Auburn University in Alabama. The Harbert Center houses the Department of Civil Engineering and contains classrooms, laboratories, environmental isolation rooms, and a "reaction floor" designed to withstand heavy loads.

Ceremonies were held in September to mark the signing of an agreement between the National Asphalt Pavement Association (NAPA) Education Foundation and Auburn University in Alabama formally establishing the National Center for Asphalt Technology (NCAT). At the center, research will be conducted on all phases of asphalt pavement design, construction, and performance. Willis H. Duininck, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the NAPA Education Foundation, commented that "the asphalt industry is taking the boldest and most innovative step in its history toward shaping and directing its own future" by establishing NCAT.

"It is a great tribute for Auburn University to have been chosen as the site for this National Center for Asphalt Technology," said Dr. James E. Martin, President of Auburn University, "and it is not only an indication of the recognition accorded our outstanding research facilities and faculty, but marks a unique partnership between private industry and academic institutions to solve industry-related problems on a national scale to the benefit of this nation's transportation system."

In his remarks at the signing ceremonies, Ray A. Barnhart, Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, said: "It is just such a partnership between the private sector and academia that this administration has encouraged because it is only through such initiatives that real progress can be made in meeting the needs and goals of the private sector acting in their own behalf. We congratulate the NAPA Education Foundation and Auburn University in the establishment of the National Center for Asphalt Technology and eagerly await its contributions to the highway industry."

The National Center for Asphalt Technology is a scientific and technical research institute under the funding auspices of the NAPA Education Foundation, which also acts as a central repository and distribution center for resources and information on asphalt. NCAT will provide a national and international focus in the conduct of research into raw materials and mix design properties; the development of model undergraduate, graduate civil engineering programs, and continuing education and training programs in the area of asphalt technology; the establishment of a central data clearinghouse to provide state-of-the-art information on research (completed and in progress) worldwide; and the provision of methods for bridging the gap between theory and field practice.

The NCAT will be governed by a Board of Trustees that includes representation from both the asphalt industry and Auburn University. A director will be appointed by the board to carry out the policies and daily activities of NCAT.

The NAPA Education Foundation, Inc., established in 1979 as a nonprofit education foundation, provides funds for research and education programs designed to improve knowledge and skills in the technical and management areas related to hot mix asphalt pavement design and construction. The specific objectives of the foundation are to conduct

NAPA and TRB Hold Meeting

As a result of discussions earlier this year between John Gray, President of the National Asphalt Pavement Association, and Thomas Deen, Executive Director of the Transportation Research Board, an ad hoc meeting was held at TRB offices in August to explore approaches to improving asphalt pavement construction. In addition to Gray, Deen, and staff members, the conferees included Jon Epps, University of Nevada; Douglas Bernard, FHWA; Don Brock, ASTEC Industries; Charles Potts, APAC-Virginia, Inc.; James Scherocman, consultant, Cincinnati; Garland Steele, West Virginia Department of Highways; Leonard Wood, Purdue University; and Roger Yarbrough, University Asphalt Company. These participants were selected because they each had the ability to bring a significant and different perspective to the conference table.

Focusing on problems that reduce quality of flexible pavement construction and on actions appropriate for NAPA and TRB to undertake in addressing such problems, the meeting participants identified several problem areas, including loss of expertise in contractor and specifying agencies; failure to implement knowledge already at hand; and low levels of participation by practitioners in research, especially lack of involvement in TRB.

After a full day of discussion, several recommendations were put forth for further consideration by NAPA and TRB. Proposed was the formation of two TRB task forces: one on Improved Contracting Procedures for Highway Improvements and the other on Improving Technical Competence of Field Professionals (Flexible Pavements). It was recommended that the task forces develop TRB or NAPA Annual Meeting sessions to look at ways to improve the end products sought by all parties. Self-supporting, specialty workshops on various aspects of the problems could also be developed, and publications or other ways of disseminating research information in usable form may be proposed.

The proposals to establish these task forces will be brought before TRB's Group 2 and Division A councils in January 1987 for consideration.

Several ways to capture, package, disseminate, and preserve current knowledge will also be explored, and may include expert systems, publication of a handbook aimed at practitioners in the field, and videotape production. In addition, a variety of actions aimed at attracting more practitioners to more active participation in TRB is expected to be on the agendas of several committees during the 1987 TRB Annual Meeting in January.

Gray and Deen look forward to improved ties between NAPA and TRB, which can be expected to lead to earlier and more effective field implementation of knowledge resulting from research.

research studies to clarify and enhance the level of knowledge in hot mix asphalt pavement design and construction; to provide training programs that will transfer state-of-the-art technology and management practices; and to cooperate with other organizations in clarifying and advancing the technical and managerial state of the art of hot mix asphalt production, pavement design, and construction.

The foundation's policies and programs are established by a 15-member Board of Trustees whose members are appointed by the NAPA Executive Committee. The director of the foundation, with headquarters in Riverdale, Maryland, administers the foundation's research and development activities, education and training programs, and university programs.