As our nation’s infrastructure ages, smart decisions need to be made about our future.

As our nation’s infrastructure continues to age, and to help meet the expectations of American drivers, we need smart decisions for the future. Over the past year, we partnered with Edelman Berland to gather data about what drivers throughout the U.S. and in the Mid-Atlantic look for in a road, as well as the decision landscape for pavement specifiers.
Starting in 2013, the Asphalt Pavement Alliance, a partnership of the Asphalt Institute, the National Asphalt Pavement Association, and the State Asphalt Pavement Associations, commissioned Edelman Berland to conduct a series of qualitative and quantitative surveys to better understand the current decision landscape for state department of transportation (DOT) officials and engineers, public works agencies, private developers and other key stakeholders.

In our stakeholder interviews, state and local highway officials said they based their pavement decisions on engineering concerns and economic data for each project. They also noted DOT officials are increasingly engaging with the public to assure taxpayers that money is well spent. This enhanced the need to gather data about what matters most to drivers.

A subsequent survey was also conducted earlier this year to understand what drivers in 8 regions throughout the country thought. Drivers in Maryland are represented in the Mid-Atlantic region. This presentation will outline what local drivers want from their roadways.
Statistically significant data was collected from each of these regions. This presentation focuses on the survey results from the Mid-Atlantic which is comprised of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.
In a March 2014 online survey conducted to determined preferences on roadway conditions, more than 3,000 U.S. drivers, including those in the Mid-Atlantic were surveyed. The following is an overview of what we discovered about drivers in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.
In general, drivers in the Mid-Atlantic were frustrated by the state of our nation’s aging infrastructure and understood the need to invest public funds in the maintenance and upkeep of roads and bridges. Pavement deterioration associated with a lack of maintenance, such as potholed, cracked or crumbling pavement, was identified as the most common roadway problem encountered.

When asked how frequently each of these situations was encountered, 80% of drivers reported dealing with maintenance-related pavement deterioration on a daily or weekly basis. By comparison, water in the roadway was a more seasonal occurrence; only 14% said it was encountered daily.
After gaining insight about road conditions in the Mid-Atlantic, we asked a series of questions to determine the trade-offs drivers were willing to make to ensure smooth, well-maintained roads.
To better understand what tradeoffs drivers in the Mid-Atlantic were willing to endure for improved roads, we asked a series of questions about maintenance preferences. Here’s what we discovered:

• 82% of the driving public wanted roadwork to be conducted during off-peak driving hours so that roads could remain fully open to traffic during rush hours.

• 68% of those surveyed were willing to encounter periodic construction delays if it meant a more consistently smooth ride.

• Lastly, 71% of drivers said they want a road that is resurfaced as often as every 10 years and lasts indefinitely, to one that may receive less maintenance but may need to be replaced after 30 to 40 years.
When given fifteen pavement attributes and asked to select the three most important. The survey revealed that the issue of maintenance as very important to drivers in the Mid-Atlantic. 57% of participants said they want agencies to place an emphasis on building roads that are designed to last with regular maintenance.

The driving public rated public safety as the second most important quality with 55% desiring well-marked, safe roadways.

Drivers also want roads that can be repaired quickly (44%).
We also needed to understand the pressures on decision makers. In research conducted from June through August 2013, Edelman Berland spoke with 20 executive-level pavement decision makers and fielded a quantitative survey with another 221 transportation engineers, architects, developers and other key stakeholders at state DOTs and private entities from across the country.

Not surprisingly, pavement decision makers revealed that maintaining infrastructure with a shrinking funding stream was the top issue facing their agencies. Almost half of road owners surveyed (48%) identified transportation funding as their top challenge.

Given budget constraints, decision makers are paying close attention to ways they can most efficiently deliver and maintain a consistent level of service to drivers. To this end, they are placing an emphasis on a pavement’s structural durability, life-cycle costs, and performance — ability to meet driver’s needs.
As decision makers continue to explore ways to stretch budgets, it’s important to make the distinction between performance and presence. Drivers want roads that provide them with a consistently high level of performance. This means smooth, well-maintained roads ... the challenge is meeting this need with minimal inconvenience.

It’s important to note that asphalt pavements, when constructed and maintained properly, provide the smoothest, quietest, safest surface for drivers at the most economical cost for road owners.

The stresses of weather and traffic loading affect all pavement materials; however, with the structural layering of asphalt pavements, quick, easy resurfacing can restores the sort of superior ride quality drivers demand.
We hear from pavement officials, like you, that funding is the biggest challenge to doing your jobs. So we asked drivers in the Mid-Atlantic to tell us what they think about increasing department of transportation budgets.

When we asked if drivers would be willing to support new and additional funding mechanisms (other than current fuel taxes), to bolster transportation budgets, you see that half of drivers (50%) are supportive. They understand funding is a challenge and indicated a willingness to finding new revenues to enhance DOT/road owner budgets.
With the public willing to support increased funding as long as it finances well-maintained roads, how can DOTs ensure they’re delivering the drivability motorists want?
Going back to what matters to drivers, smoothness is by far the strongest indicator of roadway satisfaction as noted in a December 2013 online survey.

Since smoothness is what matters to drivers, it is worth noting that a focus on pavement smoothness—both building an initially smooth pavement and maintaining it to ensure smoothness over time—has multiple benefits for DOTs.

Smoothness is an indicator of quality construction and a road that is built smooth is more likely to remain smoother longer, and to require less maintenance over time.
Asphalt pavements are constructed with a mixture of materials that are continuously paved for a smooth surface and without the need for transverse expansion joints every few yards, which disrupt the ride.

In an effort to ensure roads are smooth for drivers, the industry is working with partners to develop new and improve existing pavement technologies.

A smooth roadway not only provides drivers with peace of mind, it also increases vehicle fuel efficiency and decreases wear and tear.
Asphalt pavements are built in layers adding strength and increasing the road’s carrying capacity as each layer is placed. During some phases of construction, and more importantly during maintenance operations, a road that is being worked on can be opened to traffic as soon as the pavement reaches a specified temperature and compaction.

Asphalt research facilities and partners are constantly testing ways to increase the efficiency of asphalt construction practices, allowing project managers to build roads faster and smarter.

With the option of nighttime construction asphalt pavements offer the flexibility needed to handle all levels of traffic and can be constructed or maintained quickly with minimal disruption to travelers.

There is a clear alignment between the attributes pavement designers know are associated with asphalt pavements and those drivers associate with a well-maintained road that provides a high level of drivability.
As we know, existing transportation funding cannot keep pace with repairs as America’s roads continue to age. This is a real problem that DOTs and pavement officials feel everyday.
There is alignment between what drivers want and what asphalt pavement offers.

However, there is good news. Drivers in the Mid-Atlantic want smooth surfaces that are regularly maintained to keep up with desired drivability, and they want to see delays spent in work zones minimized as much as possible. Both of these are inherent attributes of a well-constructed asphalt road.

At the end of the day, the initial economical and life-cycle costs of asphalt paired with the ability to keep the roads in a consistently drivable condition make a clear case that asphalt provides a great value.