EVALUATION OF THE NOISE CHARACTERISTICS OF MINNESOTA PAVEMENTS

By:

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Sponsored by

Minnesota Department of Transportation

July 2005

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Abstract

In today's society, traffic noise is a serious problem. The term "noise" should not be confused with the term sound. Noise is the generation of sounds that are unwanted. With respect to traffic, noise would be the generation of sounds that affect the quality of life for persons near roadways. Therefore, traffic noise can be considered an environmental pollution because it lowers the standard of living. Research in Europe and in the United States has indicated that it is possible to build pavement surfaces that will reduce the level of noise generated on roadways. This paper provides the results of testing to define the noise levels of selected highway sections for the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Research in Europe and in the United States has indicated that it is possible to build pavement surfaces that will provide low noise roadways. The National Center for Asphalt Technology (NCAT) has initiated a study to develop a pavement selection guide or design manual for use by the DOTs and others to design low noise Hot Mix Asphalt (HMA) pavement wearing courses.

Throughout the world, sound caused by transportation systems is the number one noise complaint. Highway noise is one of the prime offenders. Engine (power train), exhaust, aerodynamic and pavement/tire noise all contribute to traffic noise.

In the United States, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has published the noise standards for highway projects as 23CFR772(*1*). The FHWA Noise Abatement Criteria states that noise mitigation must be considered for residential areas when the A-weighted sound pressure levels approach or exceed 67 dB (A). To accomplish this, many areas in the United States are building large sound barrier walls at a cost of one to five million dollars per roadway mile. Noise barriers are the most common abatement strategy. The FHWA reports that the DOTs through 1998 have spent over 1.4 billion dollars on walls for noise control (*1*). At the time this report was written, these walls cost up to 5 million dollars per mile in California. Also, other strategies such as alterations of horizontal/vertical alignment, traffic controls, greenbelts and insulation of structures are used to reduce noise. Each of these noise reduction measures can add significant cost to a project. In addition, each is limited in the amount of noise reduction that is possible and in many cases cannot be used for practical reasons. For example, noise barriers cannot be used if driveways are present.

It has been shown that modification of pavement surface type and/or texture can result in significant tire/pavement noise reductions. European highway agencies have found that the proper selection of the pavement surface can be an appropriate noise abatement procedure. Specifically, they have identified that a low noise road surface can be built at the same time considering safety, durability and cost using one of the following approaches (*2*):

1. A surface with a smooth surface texture using small maximum size aggregate
2. A porous surface, such as an open graded friction course (OGFC) with a high air void content
3. A pavement-wearing surface with an inherent low stiffness at the tire/pavement interface

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this paper is to present the results of noise testing accomplished by the National Center for Asphalt Technology using a close-proximity noise trailer. The paper discusses the nature of tire/pavement noise and the results of testing selected pavements in Minnesota.

NATURE OF NOISE

Noise is defined as "unwanted sound". Different people have different perceptions of what sound they like and what sound they do not like. The roar of the crowd at a baseball game or the laughter of children may commonly be considered pleasant sounds while the sound of a lawnmower or garbage truck might be considered noise or unwanted sound (*3*).

Noise like all other sounds is a form of acoustic energy. It differs from pleasant sounds only in the fact that it often disturbs us and has the characteristics of an uninvited guest. To understand noise or sound requires an understanding of the physics of sound and how humans respond to it.

Sound is acoustic energy or sound pressure that is measured in decibels. The decibel combines the magnitude of sound with how humans hear. Since human hearing covers such a large range of sounds, it does not lend itself to be measured with a linear scale. If a linear scale was used to measure all sounds that could be heard by the human ear, most sounds (assuming a linear scale of 0 to 1) occurring in daily life would be recorded between 0.0 and 0.01. Thus, it would be difficult to discriminate between sound levels in our daily lives on a linear scale.

Instead of a linear scale, a logarithmic scale is used to represent sound levels and the unit is called a decibel or dB. The A-scale is used to describe noise. The term dB(A) is used when referring to the A-scale. The curve that describes the A-scale roughly corresponds to the response of the human ear to sound. Studies have shown that when people make judgments about how noisy a source is that their judgments correspond quite well to the A-scale sound levels. It refers to the loudness that a human ear would perceive. It, in affect, is a dB corrected to account for human hearing. The ear has its own filtering mechanisms and the inclusion of the A after dB indicates that the scale has been adjusted or "fine tuned" to hear like a human. Thus, a noise level of 85 dB(A) from a noise source would be judged louder or more annoying than a noise level of 82 dB(A). The decibel scale ranges from 0 dB(A), the threshold of human hearing, to 140 dB(A) where serious hearing damage can occur. Table 1 (*3*) represents this scale and some of the levels associated with various daily activities.

Table 1: Noise Levels Associated with Common Activities (*3*)

Activity	Noise Level (dB(A)
Lawnmower	95
Loud Shout	90
Motorcycle passing 50 feet away	85
Blender at 3 feet	85
Car traveling 60 mph passing 50 feet away	80
Normal conversation	60
Quiet Living room	40

A serene farm setting might have a decibel level of 30 dB(A) while a peaceful subdivision might be at 40 to 50 dB(A). Alongside a freeway the sound level (i.e. noise) might be in the range of 70 to 80 dB(A). The transition from a peaceful environment to a noisy environment is around 50 to 70 dB(A). Sustained exposure to noise levels in excess of 65 dB(A) can have negative health effects. As a general rule of thumb, one can only differentiate between two sound levels that are at least 3 dB(A) different in loudness.

In addition to sound level, people hear over a range of frequencies (and this is the reason for the A weighting described earlier). A person with good hearing can typically hear frequencies between 20 Hz and 20,000 Hz. An older person, however, may not be able to hear frequencies above 5,000 Hz. So this indicates, to some extent, some of the reasons why different people hear things somewhat differently.

Addition of Noise Levels

Noise levels are measured on a logarithmic scale. Therefore, when combining the effect of multiple sources this must be considered. The formula used to combine multiple sources of sound is (*3*):

$$dB(A)_t = 10 * \log\left[10^{\frac{\{dB(A)_1\}}{10}} + 10^{\frac{\{dB(A)_2\}}{10}} + \ldots + 10^{\frac{\{dB(A)_n\}}{10}}\right]$$

where: $dB(A)_t$ – the total noise level
$dB(A)_1$– the noise level of the individual sources

Figure 1 illustrates the effects of adding two point source noise levels. If the sound level from one source of sound (a blender) measured at three feet from the blender is 85 dB(A) (from Table 1), then the sound level from two blenders would be 88 dB(A) and the sound level from three blenders would 89.8 dB(A). Therefore, doubling the sound emissions would result in a 3 dB(A) increase in noise levels. This can be determined for any number of sound sources by using the above equation. For roadway surfaces this means that if the number of vehicles in the traffic flow is doubled, the sound level will increase by 3 dB(A) (*3*).

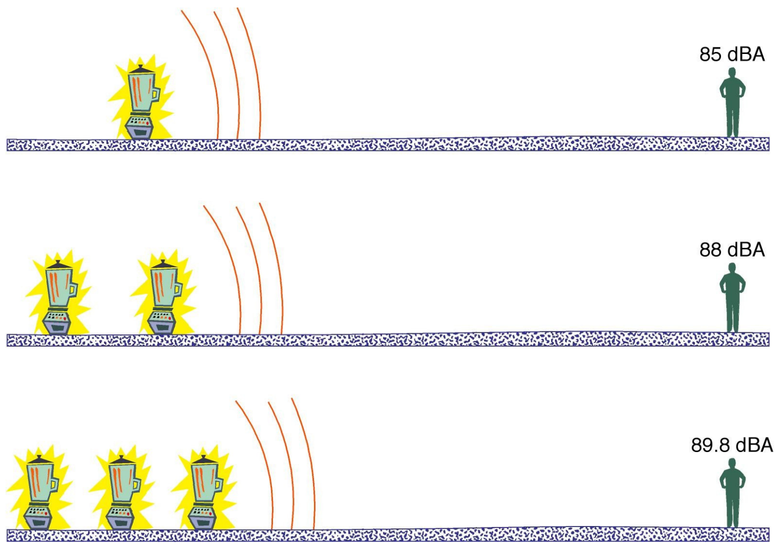

Figure 1: Effect of Adding Noise Sources

Propagation of Noise from a Point Source

An important mitigating factor with regard to noise is the distance between the source and the receiver. Sound levels decrease in accordance to the inverse-square law. This law is a fundamental law of acoustics that states that the sound varies inversely as the square of the distance. As the distance increases, the noise levels decrease. For a point source, such as a blender the attenuation factor is 6 dB (A) when the distance away from the source is doubled and is 9.5 dB (A) at three times the distance. Thus, again if you have a blender that has a sound level of 85 dB (A) at three feet then when you move six feet away from the blender the noise level would be 79 dB (A) and if you move three times the distance (9 feet) away from the blender the noise level would be 75.5 dB (A). This is illustrated in Figure 2.

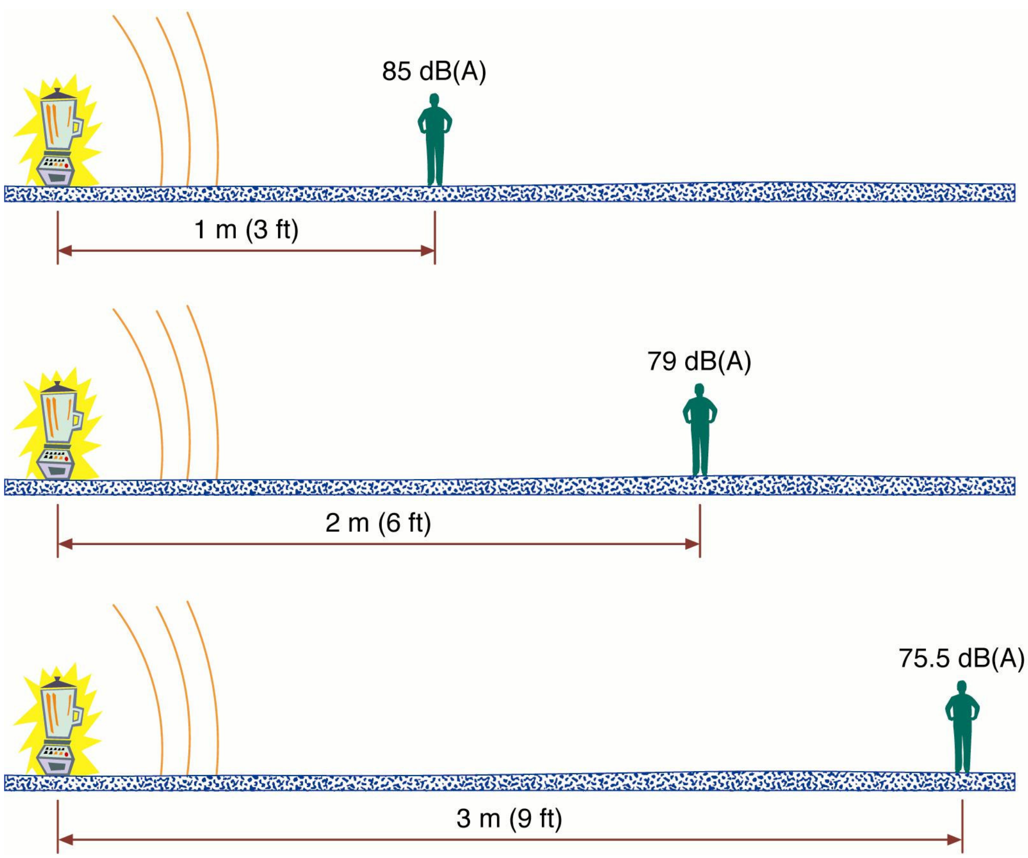

Figure 2: Effect of Distance on a Point Noise Source

Propagation of Traffic Noise

Roadway noise acts in a different manner. Roadway noise is classified as a line source since noise is transmitted along the entire length of the roadway (*3*). As a vehicle passes by a point, the noise is reaching the point from all along the roadway, or from each point where the vehicle was. As the distance from the source increases, the noise level decreases at a lower rate than from a single point noise source. For paved surfaces, the doubling of the distance would result in a 3 dB (A) reduction in the noise level. Thus, if a point 16 feet from the center of the noise source (the center of the lane) has a noise level of 85 dB (A), then a point 32 feet from the center of the noise source would have a noise level of 82 dB (A). This is illustrated in Figure 3.

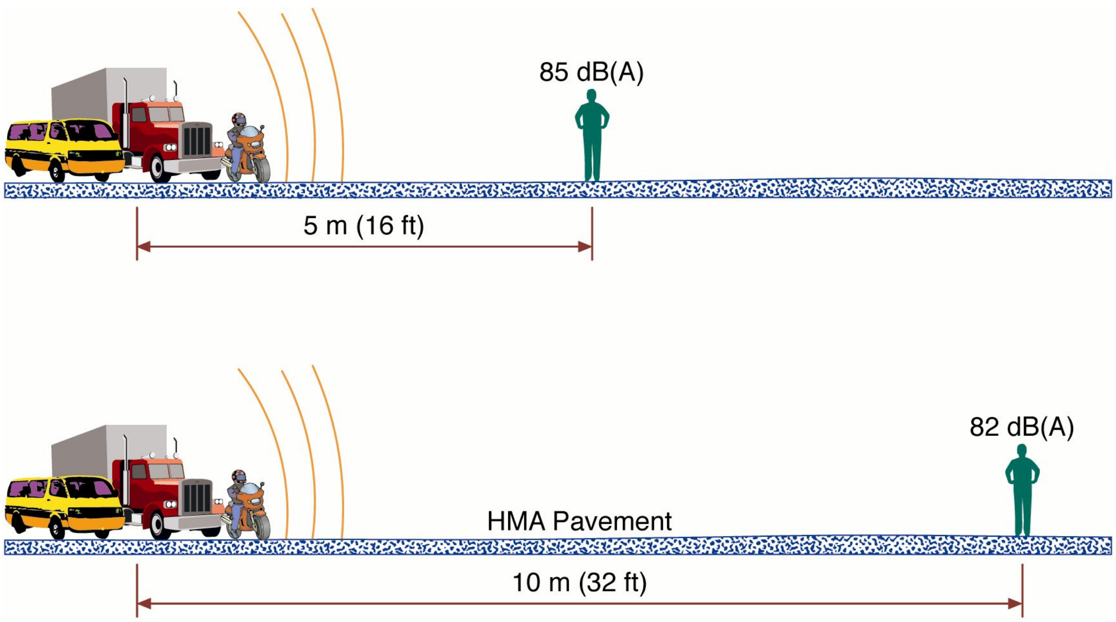

Figure 3: Effect of Distance on a Line Noise Source Over a Paved Surface

The noise level near the road not only depends on the noise being generated by the traffic but, also the characteristics of the ground adjacent to the road. The Traffic Noise Model used by the Federal Highway Administration (*3*) to predict noise levels along the side of the roadway uses the following equation to approximate the drop off:

$$dB(A) = 10 * \log_{10}\left\{\left(\frac{d_1}{d_2}\right)^{1+\alpha}\right\}$$

where: α = attenuation coefficient which is
0.0 for hard ground or pavement
0.5 for soft ground

d_1 , d_2 = distance from roadway centerline

Thus, if the noise level is 85 dB(A) at the edge of pavement which is at 16 feet (1/2 of a 12 foot lane plus a ten foot shoulder) from the center of the noise source and the man is 200 feet from the roadway edge with soft ground between the roadway edge and the man this equation would predict that the noise level would be 68.5 dB(A) at the man. This is illustrated in Figure 4. In a rural situation, where the ground between the roadway edge and the receiver is soft and covered with vegetation the noise level would be further reduced due to absorption of the sound into the ground.

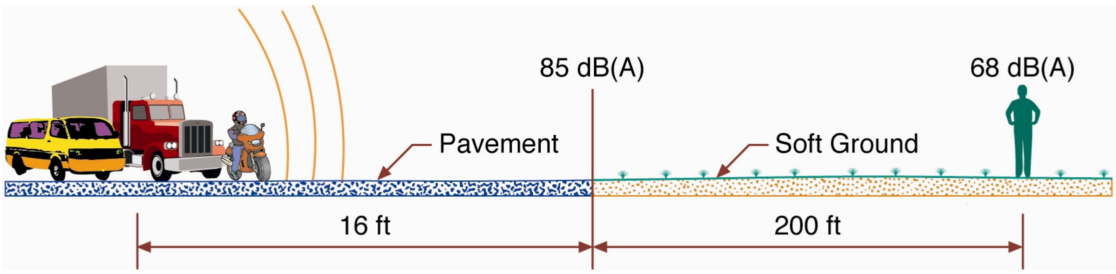

Figure 4: Effect of Distance on a Line Noise Source
Sound Traveling Over Soft Ground

FIELD MEASUREMENT OF ROAD NOISE

A standardized method for the measurement of noise is necessary to allow the pavement engineer to characterize the level of the noise from different pavement wearing courses. Considerable work has been done to develop such techniques.

Two concepts used for measuring roadway noise in the field are:

1. Far-field or wayside measurements where the noise level is measured by microphones that are placed along side the roadway.
    a. The statistical pass-by (SPB) procedures as defined by both International Standards Organization (ISO) Standard 11819-1 *(2)* and the FHWA in their manual Measurement of Highway-Related Noise *(3),*
    b. The controlled pass-by procedures (CPB) using either a single vehicle or multiple selected vehicles *(4).*
    c. Time-averaged studies where the noise level is measured for a specified period of time to evaluate the environmental impact of traffic noise on the community.
2. Near-field or close-proximity techniques (CPX) where the noise level is measured by microphones placed near the tire/pavement interface. There are two approaches to conducting this type of testing:
    a. The procedures that were developed in Europe and are defined by ISO Standard 11819-2 *(5*). These procedures measure sound pressure.
    b. The procedure developed at General Motors that uses sound intensity to measure the noise levels *(6).*

Statistical Pass-by Methods

The statistical pass-by method consists of placing microphones at a defined distance from the vehicle path at the side of the roadway. In Europe, the ISO Standard 11819-1 calls for placing microphones 25 feet from the center of the vehicle lane at a height of 4 feet above the pavement. It also requires that the noise characteristics and speed of 180 vehicles be obtained (100 automobiles and 80 dual-axle and multi-axle trucks). This data is then analyzed to determine the statistical pass-by index (SPBI) (*6*).

The FHWA procedure developed by the Volpe Transportation Systems Center (*6*) calls for the placement of a microphone or microphones 50 feet (instead of 25 feet) from the center of the travel lane. The ground surface within the measurement area must be representative of acoustically hard terrain, the site must be located away from known noise surfaces, and is to exhibit constant-speed roadway traffic operating under cruise conditions. The FHWA procedure does not specifically state the number of vehicles required for a valid sample. It states that the number of samples is somewhat arbitrary and is often a function of budgetary limitations. But, the procedure does provide some guidance. For example if the traffic speed is 51 to 60 mph the minimum number of samples recommended is 200.

Both of these pass-by methods are time consuming to conduct. The results vary based on the traffic mix (even if the vehicle types are the same the differences in tires can cause problems). The testing conditions that must be met to conduct these measurements are very restrictive. The roadway must be essentially straight and level, there is a limit on the background noise, no acoustically reflective surfaces can be within 30 feet of the microphone position, and the traffic must be moving at a relatively uniform speed. The result of these restrictions is that a limited number of pavement surfaces can be tested economically.

Single Vehicle Pass-by or Controlled Pass-by Method

In the single vehicle pass-by method, noise from cars and light trucks is typically measured at a specially designed test site. The vehicle approaches the site at a specified speed in a specified gear. There are no national standards for this type of testing. An example of this type of testing is a study conducted by Marquette University for the Wisconsin DOT (*8*). In this study, they used a 1996 Ford Taurus that was operated at 60, 65 and 70 mph in the right lane. They conducted their testing by placing two microphones five feet above the pavement and positioned at 25 feet from the center of the traffic lane. The microphones were placed two hundred feet apart. Three runs were made to collect enough data for each speed.

Another method (*8*) to conduct this testing is to conduct the testing on an accelerating vehicle. In this procedure at the entrance to a “trap” section of the test site, the vehicle begins to accelerate at full throttle. A sound level meter is set at a specified distance from the center of the travel path of the vehicle and is used to capture the maximum sound level of the vehicle as it passes through the “trap”. This procedure tends to emphasize power train noise since the vehicle is in full acceleration during the test.

Time-Averaged or Community Noise Level Methods

The time-averaged or community noise level methods are defined by the FHWA Manual Measurement of Highway Noise *(3)* that details procedures for conducting this type of noise survey. The data is used to determine for example the community-noise exposure level (L_{den}) and the day-night average sound level (L_{dn}). In this method the noise level of an existing traffic stream is determined over a time period (for example 15 minutes, 30 minutes or an hour). The time period and the location of the microphones will vary depending on the objectives of the study being conducted. Traffic counts and categories of vehicles and speeds of the vehicles along with meteorological data must be captured.

Near-field Measurements or Close-Proximity Methods (CPX)

Near-field tire/pavement noise consists of measuring the sound levels at or near the tire/pavement interface. In the CPX method, sound pressure or sound intensity is measured using microphones located near the road surface.

The requirements for the CPX trailer are described in ISO Standard 11819-2 (*7*). This method consists of placing microphones near the tire/pavement interface to directly measure tire/pavement noise levels. In 2002, NCAT built two CPX trailers, one for the Arizona Department of Transportation and one for use by NCAT. A picture of the NCAT trailer is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: NCAT Close Proximity Trailer

The ISO Standard calls for the measurement of sound pressure and the microphones at eight inches from the center of the tire and four inches above the surface of the pavement. The microphones are mounted inside an acoustical chamber to isolate the sound from passing traffic.

The acoustical chamber is required because sound pressure microphones will measure the sound from all directions and thus, there is a need to isolate the sound from other traffic and sound reflective surfaces. Figure 6 shows the mounting of the microphones and the acoustical chamber.

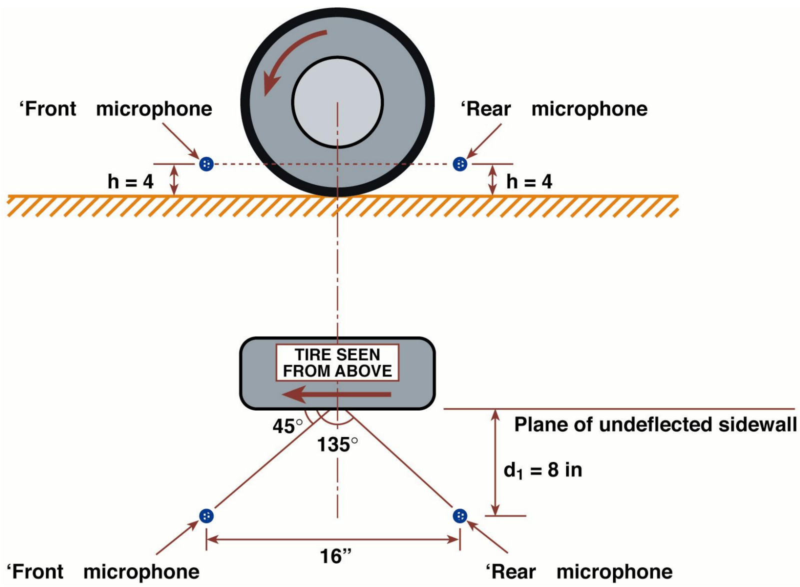

Figure 6: Diagram Showing Microphone Locations in NCAT CPX Trailer

A concern with regard to the use of near-field measurements is that they measure only the tire/pavement noise component of traffic related noise (*2*). The standard method used by the FHWA's Volpe Laboratories for measuring traffic noise is the statistical pass-by method. This method was selected because it includes both the power train and tire/pavement noise. Both the power train and tire/pavement noise are strongly related to vehicle speed. At low speeds power train noise dominates while at high speeds tire/pavement noise dominates. As was discussed earlier, work done in Europe has indicated that there is a crossover speed for constant-speed driving of about 25 to 30 mph for cars and about 35 to 45 mph for trucks (*2*). At speeds less than 25 to 30 mph for cars or 35 to 45 mph for trucks, the power train noise dominates; however, at higher speeds the tire/pavement noise is more prevalent. Therefore, it appears that the concept of measuring the noise level of roadways at the tire/pavement interface is valid for roadways having speed limits above 45 mph.

The near-field test procedures offer many advantages:

1. The ability to determine the noise characteristics of the road surface at almost any arbitrary site.
2. It could be used for checking compliance with a noise specification for a surface.
3. It could be used to check the state of maintenance, i.e. the wear or damage to the surface, as well as clogging and the effect of cleaning porous surfaces.
4. It is much more portable than the pass-by methods, requiring little setup prior to use.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM OTHER NCAT NOISE TESTING

NCAT has now tested approximately 300 pavement surfaces in ten states *(9)*. This includes 201 HMA surfaces that includes different Superpave gradations, microsurfacing, NovaChip, SMA and OGFC surfaces. Forty-three Portland Cement Concrete Pavement (PCCP) surfaces have been tested. The following are average values from that testing (only test sections of at least one-mile in length are included in these averages):

1. HMA Pavements

   a. Open-graded (fine gradation) mixes - 93 dB(A)
   b. Dense graded HMA - 97 dB(A)
   c. Stone Matrix Asphalt Mixes - 96 dB(A)
   d. Open-graded (coarse gradation) mixes - 97 dB(A).
   e. Average variability over a one-mile section - 3.8 dB(A)

2. PCCP pavements:

   a. Diamond Ground – 98.1 dB(A)
   b. Longitudinally tined – 98.8 dB(A)
   c. Longitudinally grooved – 101.6 dB(A)
   d. Transverse tined – 102.6 dB(A)
   e. Average variability over a one-mile pavement section – 4.4 dB(A)

The results presented above are representative of values reported with a CPX trailer in Europe. There is no official definition of what constitutes a quiet pavement. Dr Sandberg in his book *(2)* defines "A *low noise road surface* as a road surface which, when interacting with a rolling tyre, influences vehicle noise in such a way as to cause at least 3 dB(A) lower noise level than that obtained on conventional and *most common* road surfaces." The most common road surface in the United States is HMA. Approximately 92% of the pavement surfaces are HMA. Thus if the "most common" road surface is a dense graded HMA, it could be concluded that a "low noise road surface" would be a surface that has a noise level of about 94 dB(A) when measured with a CPX trailer.

DISCUSSION OF TEST RESULTS

The National Center for Asphalt Technology tested 32 HMA and PCCP pavement sections on Minnesota DOT highways and nine sections at MnRoad. All testing on the main highways was done at 60 mph on mainline roads with two tire types. Testing at MnRoad was done at both 45 and 60 mph. The reason for conducting the testing with two types of tires is to provide a better representation of the tire/pavement noise levels for each surface type. The two tires used were a Goodyear Aquatred and a Uniroyal Tiger Paw. Appendix A contains pictures of each tire type thus showing the tire tread pattern. Three tests were conducted with each tire type on each pavement surface.

Table 2 presents the test results for the various highways tested in Minnesota. Table 3 presents a summary of the test results by surface type, and Table 4 presents the results for the testing done at MnRoad. Appendix B contains pictures of each of the test surfaces and the noise data for each site. At all of the sites at MnRoad and at selected MN DOT highway sites the pavement texture was measured using a Circular Texture Meter (CTMeter).

Table 2: Test Results (Minnesota Highways)

NCAT Test #	Highway	Direction	Surface Type	Start	End	Average Noise Level (dB(A))
MN-01	I-35	S	NovaChip	17	16	100.3
MN-02	I-90	W	Diamond Ground PCCP	143	142	100.0
MN-03	I-90	E	Turf Drag	226	227	99.8
MN-04	I-90	W	HMA - Superpave	227	226	99.3
MN-05	I-35	N	HMA - Superpave	44	45	99.7
MN-06	I-35	S	HMA - 2361	45	44	99.4
MN-07	US 14	W	MacroSurfacing	155	154	99.1
MN-08	ST 52	S	HMA – Superpave	91	90	97.7
MN-09	ST 52	S	Diamond Ground PCCP	101	100	98.8
MN-10	I-494	W	HMA - 12.5 mm Superpave	65	66	96.7
MN-11	I-494	W	NovaChip	68	69	96.6
MN-12	I-494	N	Tined PCCP	21	22	106.1
MN-13	I-494	S	Tined PCCP	22	21	106.3
MN-14	US 169	S	Turf Drag PCCP	102	101	98.3
MN-15	US 169	N	Turf Drag PCCP	100.4	101.5	99.3
MN-16	I-94	E	Diamond Ground	252	253	99.5
MN-17	ST 36	E	Microsurfacing	Victoria St.	4	98.2
MN-18A	I-694	W	Diamond Ground PCCP	40	Central Ave.	100.8
MN-18B	I-694	W	Turf Drag PCCP*	40	Central Ave.	104.8
MN-18C	I-694	W	Tined PCCP	40	Central Ave.	105.5
MN-19A	I-694	E	Diamond Ground PCCP	Central Ave.	40	100.7
MN-19B	I-694	E	Tined PCCP	Central Ave.	40	105.8
MN-19C	I-694	E	Tined PCCP	Central Ave.	40	106.1
MN-20	I-35W	N	Turf Drag PCCP	35	36	99.1
MN-21	I-35W	S	Turf Drag PCCP	36	35	99.1
MN-22	I-94	W	Broom PCCP	US 169	28	98.1
MN-23	I-394	E	HMA - 12.5 mm Superpave	5	6	97.8
MN-24	ST 60	E	Microsurfacing	33	34	101.0
MN-25	I-394	E	NovaChip	6.3	7.5	97.7
MN-26	ST 60	W	PCCP	34	33	99.4
MN-27	I-94	E	Turf Drag PCCP	123	124	100.1
MN-28	I-94	W	Turf Drag PCCP	124	123	99.2

* excluded from analysis – not built under current specification

Table 3: Summary of Test Results (Minnesota Highways)

Type	Number of Sites Tested	Noise Level (dB(A)		
		Average	Minimum	Maximum
Turf/Broom PCCP	7	99.0	98.1	100.1
Diamond Ground PCCP	4	100.1	98.8	100.7
Tined PCCP	5	105.8	105.5	106.3
NovaChip	3	98.2	96.6	100.3
Microsurfacing	2	99.6	98.2	101.0
HMA	6	98.4	96.7	99.7
Macrosurfacing	1	99.1	-	-

Table 4: Test Results – MnRoad

Cell	Surface Type	Noise Level		Average Texture Depth
		45 mph	60 mph	
3	HMA	96.0	100.2	0.89
4	Macrosurfacing	93.6	97.8	0.74
5	Tined PCCP	97.6	102.3	0.56
16	Macrosurfacing	94.6	99.0	0.66
20	Macrosurfacing	91.5	95.6	0.23
26	HMA	94.0	97.0	0.65
35	HMA	95.3	98.5	0.73
37	Tined PCCP	97.2	101.3	0.48
38	Tined PCCP	97.2	101.7	0.48

Table 5: Noise vs Texture Main Highways

Site	Type	Noise Level (dB(A))	Texture Depth
10	HMA – 12.5 mm Superpave	97.7	0.38
11	NovaChip	96.0	0.95
17	Microsurfacing	97.7	0.45
18C	Tined PCCP	104.7	0.59
20	Turf Drag PCCP	99.1	0.26
22	Broom Drag PCCP	99.3	0.50
23	HMA – 12.5 mm Superpave	97.7	0.37
25	NovaChip	92.4	1.05

Texture vs Noise Levels

To evaluate the effect of surface texture on the noise level of a pavement surface testing was conducted on a number of the sites using the Circular Texture Meter (see Figure 7) to determine the mean texture depth for the pavement surface. Tables 4 and 5 above present the data. Figure 8 presents a plot of mean texture depth versus noise level for the surfaces examined. The data shows no relationship for the HMA surfaces and a weak relationship between mean profile depth and noise level for the PCCP surfaces. The lack of relationship for the HMA surfaces could be explained by the fact that the porosity of the pavement contributes significantly to the noise level for HMA pavements.

Figure 7: Circular Texture Meter

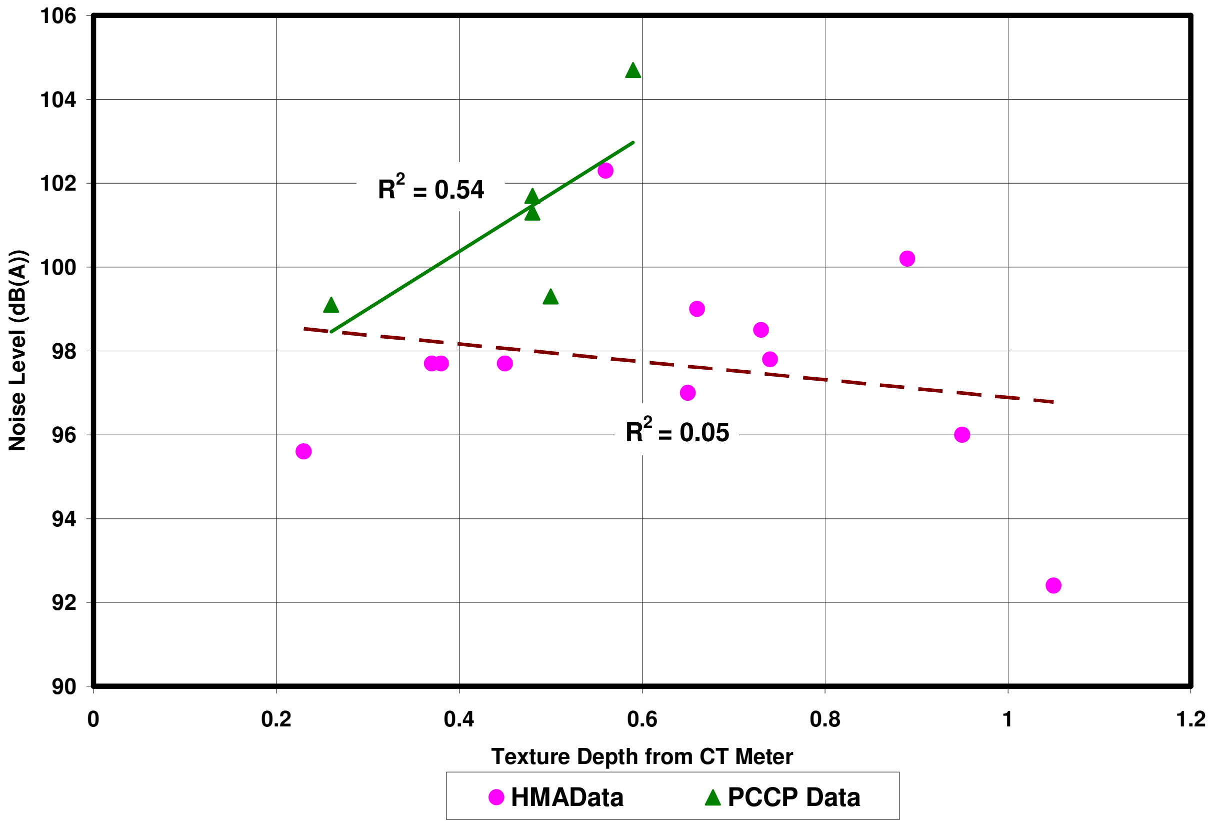

Figure 8: Relationship between Mean Particle Depth and Noise Level

FFT Analysis

For traffic noise, it is important to consider not only the magnitude of the noise but also the frequency. Sound at low frequencies is generally less attenuated by distance than sound at high frequencies and thus propagates further from the road. The sound wave files collected in this study were analyzed using a Fourier Transform technique to produce a frequency spectrum plot. Figure 9 shows the average spectrums for the four PCCP surface types and Figure 10 shows the spectrums for the three HMA surface types.

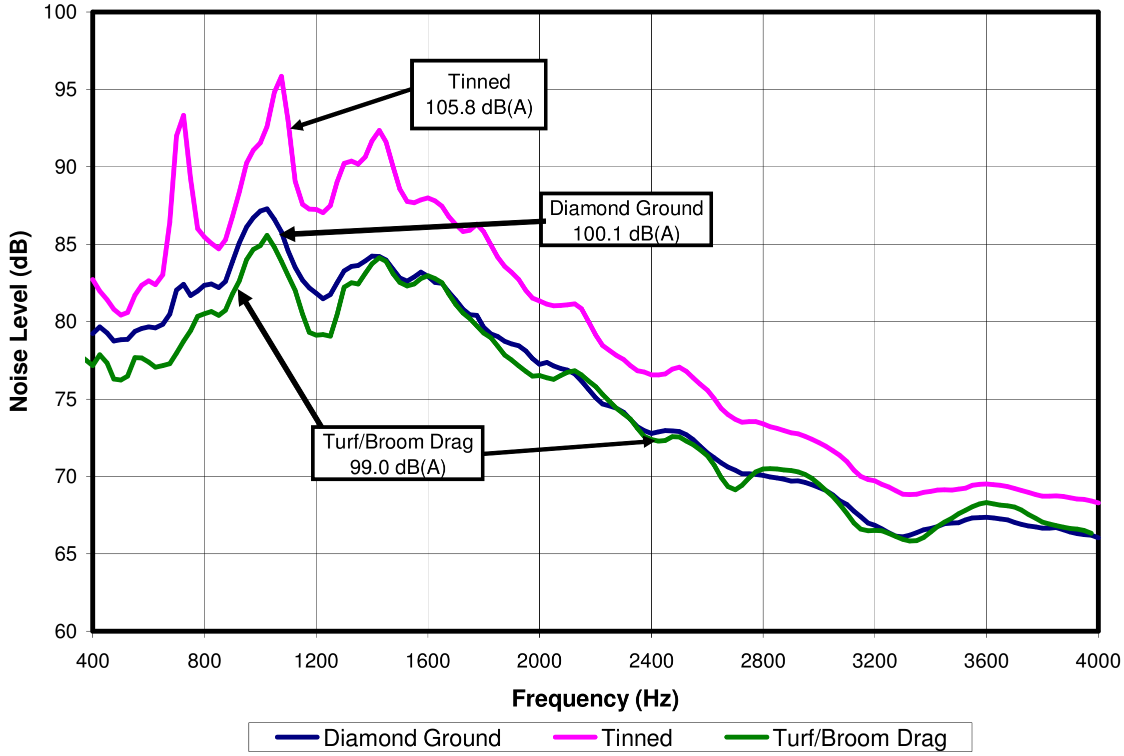

Figure 9: Comparison of the Frequency Spectrum for the Different PCC Texture Patterns

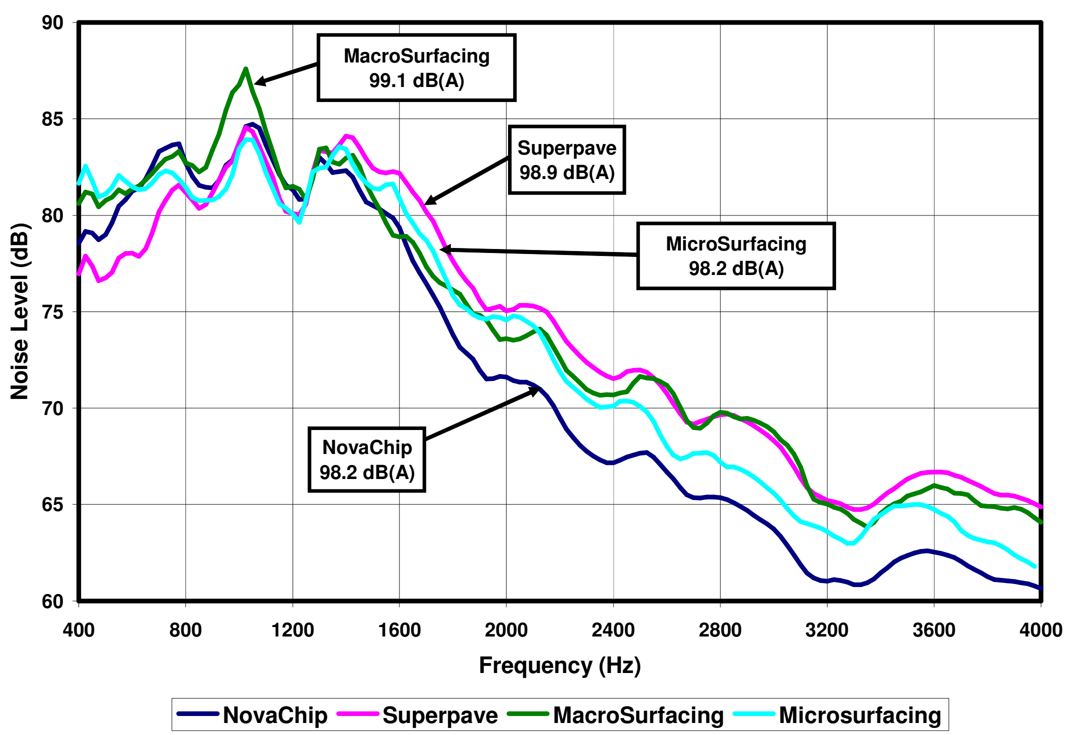

Figure 10: Comparison of the Frequency Spectrum for the Different HMA Surfaces

Four types of texture for Portland cement concrete pavements were tested: random transversely tined, turf/broom drag and diamond ground. Figure 9 shows the frequency spectrum for these surface types. As can be seen from these curves, the tined surface has three peak noise levels (700 hz, 1000 hz, and 1400 hz). As shown above this is the noisiest pavement tested. The surface will have a low rumbling noise (700 hz) and a winning sound (1400 hz). The other surfaces have a moderate noise level at all frequencies.

Four types of HMA surfaces were tested. The macrosurfaced roadway had the highest noise level with a significant frequency peak at 1000 Hz. The NovaChip section had a high noise level at low frequencies (a rumbling type sound) and then drops off rapidly after about 1200 Hz. This curve is similar to the type of response that NCAT has seen for an Open Graded Friction Course (OGFC). Thus, it appears that the NovaChip surface absorbs some of the high frequency sound.

Variability of Pavement Noise

To adequately predict the noise level at a point along a roadway (e.g. a person's backyard or a swimming pool by a hotel), it is not only necessary to have an understanding of the total magnitude of noise that emits from traffic on a paved surface but also the variability of the noise along the pavement surface. The standard data collection process used for this study was to determine the average noise level over approximately one mile of paved surface. The noise level along the pavement section will vary due to surface variability. The test sections for this study were approximately one mile long and the testing was done at 60 miles per hour; therefore, each section represents approximately 60 seconds of data. Each test section was broken into two second segments (or sections of 176 feet). A sampling of the sections tested was analyzed to provide an understanding of the typical variability.

The PCCP pavement surface type with the lowest variability was the turf drag (average -1.75 dB(A)) and the highest was the diamond ground surface (3.61 dB(A)). Based on other testing done by NCAT typically diamond ground surfaces have a high variability. It is thought that this is a reflection of not uniformly grinding out of the transverse tined surface as the tining is not completely removed in low spots.

The HMA Superpave pavements provided the most uniform surface (from a noise perspective) of the surfaces tested. The NovaChip surface had a high variability (probably due to its open type of texture).

Table 6: Longitudinal Variability of Noise Data for Selected Surfaces

NCAT Site Number	Mix Type of Surface	Average dB(A)	Range dB(A)	Standard Deviation dB(A)
MN - 02	Diamond Ground PCCP	100.0	1.70	0.43
MN - 04	Superpave	99.3	1.75	0.45
MN - 10	Superpave	96.7	0.99	0.27
MN - 11	NovaChip	96.6	4.10	0.93
MN 18 - A	Diamond Ground PCCP	100.8	4.34	1.06
MN 18 - B	Turf Drag	104.8	1.67	0.44
MN 18 – C	Tined PCCP	105.5	2.49	0.86
MN 19 - A	Diamond Ground PCCP	100.7	4.79	1.35
MN 19 - B	Tined PCCP	105.8	0.75	0.22
MN 19 – C	Tined PCCP	106.1	3.70	1.05
MN 20	Turf Drag PCCP	99.1	1.86	0.51
MN 21	Turf Drag PCCP	99.1	1.74	0.39
MN 22	Broom PCCP	98.1	2.53	0.66
MN 23	12.5 mm Superpave	97.8	1.10	0.27
MN 25	NovaChip	97.7	3.84	1.20

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the testing conducted for this study the following conclusions are made:

1. The tire/pavement noise levels of the pavements tested in Minnesota are similar to those found by NCAT on other highways throughout the United States.
2. The Hot Mix Asphalt (HMA) pavements had an average noise level of 98.6 dB(A)).
3. Mn/DOT's current specification for Turf/Broom drag provided the lowest noise levels for the PCCP surfaces (average – 99 dB(A)).
4. The transversely tined PCCP surfaces were considerably noisier than all the other surfaces tested.
5. A relationship was found between surface texture and tire/pavement noise.

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APPENDIX A

PICTURES OF TEST TIRES

TIRES USED FOR STUDY

Figure A: 1 Goodyear Aquatred

Figure A: 2 Uniroyal TigerPaw

APPENDIX B

PICTURES OF TEST SURFACES