The Road to Sustainable Highway Construction Practices¹

In 2016, researchers from the University of Washington, Michigan Technological University, and Greenroads International undertook National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Project 10-91A to produce a sustainable highway construction guidebook. This guidebook (NCHRP 916) was issued in 2019 and offers some insight into the current status of sustainability in the highway construction industry.

The starting point for this guidebook was to ask the construction industry what it already knew. Members of that industry shared what works, what does not work, what is missing and what needs to change. Some of the responses can be categorized as follows:

- Sustainability is strongly associated with durability and long life;
- There is no leading entity in highway sustainability;
- Materials recycling is the most-identified sustainable construction practice;
- Sustainable practices tend to work.

These responses also generated 79 sustainable construction practices, which are described in the guidebook. This description also includes documents, websites or videos to go to get more details. As such this guidebook is a good reference, although as the authors recognize themselves, some of these practices may not withstand the test of time very well. But for now it provides interesting reading material.

The NCHRP report 916 can be downloaded at Sustainable Highway Construction Guidebook | The National Academies Press (nap.edu)

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¹ The text of this was taken from the article “The Road to Sustainable Highway Construction Practices” in the November-December 2020 issue of TR News, the magazine of TRB.