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Incorporating Recycled Crumb Rubber into Asphalt: A Comprehensive Review

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ABSTRACT

Using asphalt mixtures with added materials became a significant field for enhancing asphalt properties. Crumb rubber or recycled tire rubber is one of these materials that gained great attention because it provides asphalt mixtures with enhanced properties and with the privilege of being economically and environmentally efficient where it reduces the waste tires from being disposed to nature. This study explores the latest articles in this field with a focus on different methods used to incorporate crumb rubber (CR) into the asphalt matrix. It has been noticed that most articles focus on the wet process for incorporating CR into asphalt. This method is known for its efficiency, but it consumes less CR as compared to the dry process. The dry process deals with CR as a substitute rather than an additive, but it is used less around the world in enhancing asphalt properties where it has less effect on asphalt characteristics development. The third method (terminal) is a mix between the mentioned methods and comprises the prospectives of both methods. The need for this research is underscored by the growing environmental and economic challenges associated with waste tire disposal and the continual degradation of road infrastructure. This study contributes to developing more sustainable, durable, and cost-effective road paving solutions by exploring the efficacy and methods of crumb rubber integration into asphalt.

Keywords: Crumb rubber, Sustainability, Wet process, Dry process

1. INTRODUCTION

Asphalt concrete mixtures are integral to national highways and are crucial in sustaining commerce and personal mobility. Despite their importance, asphalt pavements are increasingly plagued by reduced longevity and various failures. These issues may be related to many factors such as changes in crude oil and refining processes, improper mixture design, increasing pressure from tires, characteristics development, and additive misuse. Accurately, the dropouts in asphalt make can be displayed in three shapes: rutting, which is

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caused by high temperatures and heavy truck movement; fatigue cracking, which is caused by repetitive loading; and low-temperature cracking, which is caused by thermal stresses **(Asam, 2001)**.

In Iraq, rapid development and a construction boom have led to escalated traffic volumes, often surpassing designed load capacities. Coupled with the region's high temperatures, these factors significantly contribute to premature pavement distress, particularly rutting and moisture damage. Baghdad, where roads and their maintenance hold great importance, exemplifies the need for resilient infrastructure. One of the 21st century's pressing waste management challenges is tire disposal after their useful lives. Due to their flammability and chemical composition, these non-biodegradable items are significant sources of dangerous vapors and toxins seeping into the ground and water **(Albayati, 2012)**.

However, the value of the rubber content in these tires should not be overlooked **(Karakurt, 2015; Markl and Lackner, 2020)**. Utilizing crumb rubber (CR) as a pavement additive that improves performance offers a viable recycling and reuse strategy **(Bressi et al., 2019; Brasileiro et al., 2019)**. Furthermore, the solar radiation-induced degradation of stockpiled tires poses a long-term threat to soil and groundwater. When burned, tires generate thick, black smoke, spread heat rapidly, and leave behind soil-contaminating oily residue. Incorporating scrap tire rubber in concrete, alongside fine and coarse aggregates, has been explored to mitigate waste and yield environmental and health benefits **(Brito and Saikia, 2012; Kocsis et al., 2013; Miranda, 2018)**. When waste tires are disposed of or incorrectly recycled, there can be severe health and environmental consequences. Consequently, their recycling into civil engineering applications, notably asphalt paving mixtures and Portland cement concrete, has garnered increasing interest. Integrating crumb rubber in asphalt mixtures has proven successful in enhancing compatibility with rubber particles and asphalt binder and improving mixture properties **(Wulandari and Tjandra, 2017)**.

Many research articles have explored the effects of substituting crumb rubber instead of regular aggregates on concrete and asphalt's resulting performance **(Zhang et al., 2022; Mohammed et al., 2023)**. **)Deshmukh et al. 2017(** have noticed the antioxidant properties of carbon, which is one of the significant constituents of CR, leading to more ageing resistance of the produced asphalts. Also, many studies explored the effect of crumb rubber on asphalt properties, such as marshal stability, moisture resistance, and mechanical properties **(Shu and Huang, 2014; Al-Mosawi, 2023)**. In addition to the properties mentioned above, (**Saad et al., 2019; Ahmad, 2015)** evaluated the stability, resistance to rutting and moisture damage of such mixes. (**Tahami et al., 2019)** explored the effect of CR on asphalt rutting properties.

The purpose of this study is to discover the environmental benefits and efficiency of using crumb rubber in asphalt mixtures with an emphasis on sustainable solutions in the asphalt pavement industry by using recycled materials, which enables us to enhance asphalt properties on one side and save nature from wasted tires in the other.

2. ASPHALT CONCRETE

Asphalt or bitumen is a hydrocarbon produced after refining crude oil and removing lighter components **(Zheng et al., 2021)**. It consists of 4 major components: Asphaltene, colloid, aromatic, and saturated ingredients, and is usually regarded as the same colloidal system **(Padmarekha and Krishnan, 2011; Zuo et al., 2019).** Road construction, an essential part of transportation infrastructure, requires a careful balance between safety and cost-

effectiveness. Engineers must consider the environmental impact, traffic demands, and properties of asphalt mixtures in their designs **(Peralta, 2009; Mashaan, 2012).**

In asphalt concrete (AC), asphalt cement is used as a binder, serving several critical roles: it holds the aggregates together and acts as a waterproof sealant. However, asphalt cement can change over time, leading to fatigue and cracking in the pavement **(Mahrez, 2008; Peralta et al., 2010).** Such pavement distresses, including rutting and fatigue cracking, often originate from issues with the asphalt cement and the mixture. Traditional asphalt's dynamic characteristics and long-term durability are insufficient to withstand these loads, prompting researchers to investigate alternatives such as crumb rubber-modified asphalt **(Mashaan, 2014; Wang et al., 2018)**.

The performance of bituminous surfacing is significantly influenced by two types of factors: vehicular and thermal. Vehicle loads can cause distress at extreme pavement temperatures **(Sarsam and Hasan, 2017)**. When temperatures are high, asphalt cement may become too fluid, failing to resist the tearing operation of vehicle tires. In contrast, it might become brittle at lower temperatures, leading to fractures under vehicle stress. The "Normal Stresses" theory explains this behavior. The Wiesenberger effect applies to viscoelastic materials such as asphalt cement/scrap rubber mixes. This theory focuses on normal stress differences, which are forces that arise vertically in the direction of the shear. **(Oliver et al., 1981; Lin et al., 2017)**.

3. KINDS OF ASPHALT CONCRETE MIXTURES

In the field of roads, different kinds of asphalt mixtures are used to fulfill the needs and circumstances of every environment. The hot mix asphalt process is famous for its durability. Also, there are other processes, such as warm mix and cold mix, which have their application in specific criteria. As specified by **(Nikolaides, 2015; Mohammed et al., 2024),** all these mixed processes have their characteristics and applications in roads.

3.1 Hot Mix Asphalt

In the road building industry, hot mix asphalt has an important role, as all materials are mixed with hot asphalt at 140-160 degrees. The temperatures are selected depending on asphalt viscosity and grade, which allows for the perfect wetting of constituents by the asphalt. In the last years, crumb rubber was introduced to the hot mix method to improve further the properties of the resulting asphalt, which provides more durability and resistance to ageing and cracking in addition to the advantage of getting rid of wasted tires **(Nikolaides, 2015; Albayati, 2017)**.

3.2 Cold Mix Asphalt

This method is considered a highly efficient mix in asphalt production where it is prepared at the current temperature without the need for more energy. This type is produced by asphalt emulsion by mixing with water, which reduces its viscosity and mixes it with aggregates at 25 °C for two minutes. In this period, the water vapors from the emulsion of asphalt let it retain its characteristics. This method is practical for maintaining roads **(Mahdi and Sarsam, 2019)**.

3.3 Warm Asphalt Mixture

This method contributes to the development of road making, comprising the advantages of both cold and hot processes. It is famous for producing a mixture at 110-135 degrees for mixing and 100-115 degrees for compression. The low temperatures lead to a decrease in the viscosity of the mixture. This technique provides durability and energy efficiency **(Sarsam, 2019; Nikolaides, 2015)**.

4. CRUMB RUBBER

Initiated in the 1960s, its integration into asphalt was driven by the rubber's inherent elasticity, enhancing both skid resistance and durability in asphalt formulations **(Cong et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2013)**. This benefited pavement quality and provided a sustainable avenue for recycling used tires. Research indicates that crumb rubber is commonly incorporated into asphalt using three methods **(Hassan et al., 2014)**. **Table 1** shows the chemical composition of crumb rubber. Predominantly consisting of vulcanized rubber and various reinforcing agents, tires, as depicted in **Fig. 1**, primarily comprise natural rubber, contributing to their robustness and longevity **(Asaro et al., 2018; Akca et al., 2018)**. However, natural rubber's temperature-sensitive nature makes it prone to stickiness and reduced elasticity, leading to deformation when heated and brittleness upon cooling **(Karakurt, 2015)**.

Table 1. Chemical composition and characteristics of the used CR (by the manufacturer).

Figure 1. A typical composition of a vehicle tire **(Asaro et al., 2018; Akca et al., 2018).**

In road construction, Crumb Rubber (CR) is increasingly seen as a solution for waste tire management **(Mashaan et al., 2014; Lo Presti, 2013)**. CR is integrated into the pavement in particle size between(4.75 mm -sieve No.4) to (0.075 mm sieve No.200) by mechanically pulverizing shredded tires via ambient and cryogenic methods under various conditions **(Blumenthal, 1996; Hassan et al., 2014)**.

As **Fig. 2** illustrates, the surface texture of CR, as observed in an SEM test, varies depending on the grinding method **(Hassan et al., 2014)**. Ambiently ground CR particles are irregular and rough, possessing a greater surface area. Their porous surface can absorb oils and resins in the asphalt binder, enhancing binding efficiency **(Sienkiewicz et al., 2012; Garcia et al., 2015; Xiang et al., 2018)**. However, these particles are susceptible to ageing due to their texture and porosity, especially under heat and oxygen exposure. Upon immersion in asphalt binder, CR particles swell, filling their pores with lighter components, thereby forming a denser compound. Creating crumb rubber involves shredding tires, which are a mix of natural and synthetic rubber and carbon black, into smaller particles, simultaneously removing metal and fabric reinforcements **(Nejad et al., 2012; Alsheyab et al., 2023)**. This process results in a material that cannot be re-softened upon reheating. Factors like the rubber's type, amount, shape, and gradation significantly influence the behavior of rubbermodified asphalt mixtures **(Moreno et al., 2012)**. The dimensions and texture of the rubber particles are tailored according to specific application requirements to ensure optimal performance.

Rubber particles exhibiting inconsistent shapes and a large surface area react extra effectively with asphalt at high temperatures, resulting in a superior modified binder. Conversely, cubic-shaped particles with lower surface areas, resembling aggregates, are preferred in the dry process for their ease of integration as elastic aggregates **(Zheng et al., 2021)**. Scrap tires are processed primarily through ambient granulating (cracker-mill process) and cryogenic grinding. Both techniques reduce tire crumb particle size and separate rubber from steel and fibers. Ambient granulating, involving screeners, granulators, conveyors system, and magnets for steel removal, is the prevalent method, producing irregular, sponge-like particles varying from 0.425 mm to 4.75 mm in size, as shown in **Fig. 2**.

Figure 2. The scanning electron microscope (SEM) image shows crumb rubber on the left and ambient granulating synthetic tyre rubber on the right. Artificial tyre rubber that has been crushed using cryogenic methods**(Hassan et al., 2014).**

Cryogenic grinding, performed at temperatures between -87 to -198°C using liquid nitrogen, yields a brittle, glasslike rubber with lower surface area and elastic recovery compared to ambient granulated rubber **(Hernandez et al., 2009).**

The large surface area and non-uniform shape of ambient granulated rubber result in increased binder viscosity compared to cryogenically processed rubber, facilitating a quicker reaction with bitumen **(Huang et al., 2002; Thodesen et al., 2009)**.

4.1 Environmental Problems Related to Scrap Tires

The increasing rate of population and industrialization causes waste products at undesirable levels. One of these waste products is scrap tires (also called "end-of-life tires" (ELT)) **(Pereira et al., 2008; Presti, 2013).** Every year, approximately 17 million scrap tires are generated across the world and the annual growth rate of this number is estimated at 2%. The amount of scrap tires produced in the U.S. was 4,658,302 tons in 2019. Scrap tires are seen as one of the most concerning waste products as they are manufactured in large volumes and don't decompose easily **(Presti, 2013)**. They are either stockpiled/landfilled or utilized as fuel, new recycled products, and recycled tire production. Improper management of disposed scrap tires may pose environmental and health risks such as fire hazards and a place to breed for rodents and pests like mosquitos **(Presti, 2013)**.

4.2 Utilizations of the Scrap Tire

One of these uses is to use them as a fuel source since they provide energy at the level of good quality coalsthe Another approach is to process scrap tires chemically, i.e., thermolysis, pyrolysis, and gasification. Scrap tires are utilized in ground form after the steel and fabric components of these tires are separated. In the civil engineering area, crumb rubber (ground tire rubber) is used for different purposes such as rubberized asphalt pavements, flooring for playgrounds and stadiums, shock-absorbing mats, paving blocks, roofing material, and more **(Paje et al., 2013).** where The current applications of recycling waste tires in civil engineering practices mainly are as follows :

- 1. Used as modifiers to asphalt paving mixtures
- 2. Used as an additive to Portland cement concrete
- 3. Used as lightweight fillers
- 4. Used in whole tires as crash barriers, bumpers, and artificial reefs, etc.

5. CRUMB RUBBER APPLICATION METHODS

Crumb rubber is incorporated into asphalt by using three methods, which are depicted in the following sections:

5.1 Wet Process

The crumb rubber is mixed with asphalt, as depicted in **Fig. 3.** This process proved its efficiency in enhancing the overall performance of asphalt roads by increasing the age, lowering the noise, and improving the temperature resistance in addition to being an environmentally friendly process **(Presti et al., 2013; Singh et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2019)**. Yet, there is the problem of crumb rubber segregation from the asphalt **(Sienkiewicz**

et al., 2017; Hallmark-Haack et al., 2019), and this separation of CR from its binder is due to the high rate of settling of CR and incompatibility. The difference in densities between the binder and the CR particles is another reason, in addition to the swelling problem of the CR particles **(Wenhua Zheng et al., 2021)**.

Figure 3. The wet process **(Hassan et al.,2014)**

5.2 Dry Process

During the dry process, a fraction of the aggregate in the mixture is substituted with large rubber particles. As seen in **Fig. 4**, the rubber predominantly functions as an elastic aggregate in the mixture. This technique leads to the creation of what is known as a rubbermodified asphalt mixture, or 'CRM mixture', produced through the dry process. Historically, CRM mixtures were formulated without specific guidelines or formal standards. However, more recently, there has been a shift towards more structured asphalt mixture design approaches **(Hassan et al., 2014)**.

Figure 4. Dry process **(Hassan et al., 2014).**

5.3 Terminal Blend Process

The final mixing process is the third primary method for mixing rubber crumbs in asphalt mixtures, as fine rubber particles are mixed with the asphalt binder, and through this, we obtain a homogeneous and stable mixture. After this, we work to introduce additional rubber crumbs into the mixture as fine or coarse aggregate. This process ensures a comprehensive and even distribution of the rubber particles within the asphalt, enhancing the binder's performance and effectiveness. This method is distinguished by its ability to produce rubber asphalt that is more malleable and easier to handle than other methods, making it suitable for wide paving applications. This method often produces a mixture with improved

resistance to aging and enhanced durability. This contributes to extending the life of road surfaces, as the fine particle size of the crumb rubber used in the final mixing process allows for seamless integration into the asphalt matrix, ensuring consistency in the final product (**Ahmad, 2015).**

6. CHARACTERISTICS OF RUBBERIZED ASPHALT

Sweden was the origin of dry mix rubberized asphalt, which was developed to improve the skid and durability of roads. In 1978, the USA patented a method for incorporating coarse rubber particles into asphalt. This method employs coarse rubber particles to serve as elastic aggregates, thereby increasing the flexibility of the mixture when subjected to load. It has been reported that the bitumen undergoes a partial reaction with the finer rubber particles, resulting in an increase in viscosity and enhanced flexibility of the binder at low temperatures while maintaining its high rigidity at high temperatures **(Thodesen et al., 2009; Cong et al., 2013; Presti et al., 2013)**. Typically, 1% to 3% coarse rubber by weight of the total mixture is added, with particle sizes between 2.0 mm and 6.3 mm **(Mohammed et al., 2012;Issa et al., 2013)**. The aim is to substitute a portion of aggregates with rubber, providing elastic properties. By limiting the reaction time between bitumen and rubber particles and using coarse granulated rubber, the rubber retains its shape and rigidity. In gap-graded mixtures, rubber particles fill the voids between aggregates, while in densely graded mixtures, a coarser aggregate gradation is needed for rubber modification. The initial use of the dry mixing method was to improve pavement performance under snow and ice conditions. **(Esch et al.,1982)** reported higher skid resistance and reduced vehicular stopping distance on icy pavements using the PlusRide mixture. Additionally, according to a 1992 Federal Highway Administration report, the Cold Regions Research Engineering Laboratory investigated dry process formulations for ice debonding on pavements, noting increased ice cracking with higher coarse rubber content. However, these tests were limited to laboratory settings.

The interaction between crumb rubber (CR) and asphalt binder significantly impacts the rubberized asphalt binder's rheological properties and storage stability. Studies by **(Liu et al.,2019; Ghavibazoo et al.,2013)** have shown that CR does not affect the asphalt binder's functional groups and molecular structures, indicating a predominantly physical modification process. This interaction depends on variables like the type, percentage, size, and grade of CR and asphalt binder, and interaction parameters such as combining technique, heat degree, and time. This method involves swelling the crumb rubber **(Jamrah et al., 2019).** The interaction of rubber and CR which involoves difusion of lighter fractions of asphlat into CR eventually leading to sewlling. This process is depicted in **Figs. 5** and **6 (Fini et al. 2017; Wang et al. 2019; Hassan et al., 2014)**. The interfacial zone between CR and asphalt is transformed into a gel-like structure, increasing the viscosity and affecting the workability **(Thodesen et al., 2009; Shen et al., 2009)**.

Although it has poor workability and separation, CR-modified asphalt showed many privileges like improving crack resistance and performance in low temperatures, stress resistance and noise reduction in addition to lowering the costs of production **(Zheng et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021)**

Figure 5. Schematic representation of the asphalt binder-CR interaction process **(Wang et al., 2019)**

Figure 6. Diagram illustrating the diffusion of maltenes into crumb rubber **(Hassan et al., 2014)**

This vast exploration of the characteristics of CR-modified asphalt and the variations in methods and dosages of CR proves the capability of using CR in enhancing asphalt properties, as shown in **Table 2,** which summarizes different approaches to using CR in asphalt modification.

7. PROS AND CONS OF CR MODIFIED ASPHALT CONCRETE

Using asphalt mix modified with CR was of considerable interest due to its capability to enhance the performance of asphalt and its sustainability. There are two main reasons for using CR in asphalt: First, to improve mechanical properties and increase the ageing resistance and durability of the asphalt mixture. Second, to participate in protecting nature from waste materials. In **Table 3**, there is a comparison to show the effects of adding CR to asphalt by showing the benefits and drawbacks.

Table 3. Pros and cons of CR incorporation in asphalt.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Modifying asphalt by CR is a complicated process exploring the many side effects of asphalt modification. This study discovers the detailed differences in CR interaction with asphalt and methods of incorporation in improving the performance of asphalt. The main points extracted from the most important results and the challenges and advantages in the field of asphalt modification are:

- 1. Rubber particles are characterized by their inconsistent forms, and large surface areas react extra effectively with bitumen at elevated temperatures, creating an altered adhesion that enhances the asphalt's overall performance.
- 2. Cubical-shaped rubber particles, typically with lower surface areas, are well-suited for Intended for utilization in the dry process as flexible aggregates, easily integrating into the aggregate mix and adding flexibility to the asphalt.
- 3. The manufacturing method of crumb rubber, mainly ambient versus cryogenic grinding, significantly influences the extent of property enhancement in asphalt, with ambient ground rubber reacting faster with bitumen than cryogenically ground rubber.
- 4. The modification process of asphalt binder with CR is predominantly a physical reaction. However, it varies based on factors such as type, percentage, size, grade of CR and asphalt binder, and interaction conditions like temperature and mixing duration.Typical CR dosages for the dry addition method range from 1% to 3% by total aggregate weight. For the wet addition method, CR dosages typically as the best percentages range from 15% to 22% by the total weight of the binder. This method is effective for significant modifications in the properties of the binder itself These dosages can vary depending on specific requirements and materials used,
- 5. CR-modified asphalt demonstrates enhanced resistance to common distresses like rutting and cracking, attributed to the improved elasticity and stiffness provided by the rubber particles.
- 6. The presence of CR in asphalt mixtures can influence moisture susceptibility, with potential impacts on the water sensitivity of the mix, necessitating careful design to mitigate risks of moisture damage and stripping.
- 7. The asphalt pavement industry continuously evolves, with advancements in mixture formulations and application techniques. This includes new methods to optimize the use of CR in asphalt mixtures, balancing performance improvements with environmental and practical considerations.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Safa Ihsan Oleiwi: Writing – reviewing &editing. Dr. Amjad Hamad Khalil: Supervision, reviewing, evaluation & editing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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ادخال فتات المطاط المعاد في االسفلت – مراجعة شاملة

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الخالصة

استخدام خلطات االسفلت مع المواد المضافة اصبح مجال مهم لتحسين خواص االسفلت. فتات المطاط المعاد تدويره او االطارات المعادة هي احد هذه المواد التي اكتسبت اهتمام كبير حيث توفر خواص محسنة للخلطات االسفلتية مع امتياز الكلفة القليلة والفعالية البيئية حيث انها تقلل من االطارات التالفة التي ترمى كنفايات وتؤثر على البيئة. الدراسة تستكشف احدث المقاالت في هذا المجال مع التركيز على مختلف الطرق المستخدمة الدخال فتات المطاط المعاد في ارضية المطاط. تم مالحظة ان معظم المقاالت ركزت على العملية الرطبة الدخال فتات المطاط المعاد في االسفلت. هذه الطريقة معروفة بفعاليتها ولكنها تستهلك كمية قليلة من فتات المطاط المعاد عند مقارنتها بالعملية الجافة. العملية الجافة تتعامل مع فتات المطاط المعاد كمواد بديلة بدالً عن اعتبارها مواد مضافة ولكن هذه الطريقة مستخدمة بصورة اقل من العملية الرطبة لتحسين خواص االسفلت حيث ان لها تأثير قليل على رفع خواص الاسفلت. وهناك طريقة ثالثة وهي تجمع خواص الطريقتين المذكورة آنفاً.الحاجة لهذا البحث يتم تحفيزها عن طريق التحديات البيئة واالقتصادية المتصاعدة المرتبطة مع التخلص من نفايات االطارات والتقادم المستمر للبنية التحتية للطرق. هذه الد ارسة تشارك في تطوير حلول اقل كلفة, تقاوم الظروف ومستدامة لرصف الطرق عن طريق استكشاف فعالية وطرق ادخال فتات المطاط المعاد في االسفلت.

الكلمات المفتاحية: فتات المطاط المعاد, االستدامة, الطريقة الرطبة, الطريقة الجافة.