

portion of crumb rubber supplied to Caltrans may be imported from other states, as their procurement policies require U.S.-made, but not California-made, crumb rubber.

With CalRecycle support, Caltrans has formed the so-called “PG+5” Committee to investigate a range of proposed new policies that could greatly increase the amount of crumb rubber consumed in its paving operations. The group includes a variety of industry stakeholders, and is considering several distinct options. According to Caltrans representatives, the effort is currently on track to refine proposals and conduct testing that will allow new policies to be implemented in 2018. Caltrans estimated the original proposal—requiring use of performance-graded asphalt with 5 percent crumb rubber in all unmodified asphalt binder used in California—could result in the use of up to 8.3 million to 10 million PTE per year (compared to 3.5 million to 3.9 million PTEs per year from California crumb rubber producers used in both state and local paving over the past several years). Committee participants are vigorously debating the pros and cons of alternative policies and the potential quantity of tires that could be used. Some have suggested that Caltrans’ projection above is overly optimistic but have suggested other options that could achieve the same result. The Caltrans initiative appears to have the highest potential of any activity currently underway to boost demand for California-produced crumb rubber; however, a detailed analysis of the options is beyond the scope of this report.

Turf Infill

Use of California crumb rubber as infill in synthetic turf athletic fields was up 11 percent in 2015 compared to 2013, to 1.9 million PTEs. In addition to drivers such as reduced maintenance costs and increased play time, this market segment is being driven in part by the ongoing and severe California drought, which increases the attractiveness of the significant water savings offered by synthetic turf fields compared to natural turf. Synthetic turf used in residential and some other landscaping applications seldom use crumb rubber infill.

Despite persistent media reports citing perceived concerns over health and safety related to the use of crumb rubber infill in synthetic turf athletic fields, crumb rubber continues to be the go-to infill in the vast majority of these applications. Based on industry interviews, approximately 100 to 150 fields were installed in California in 2015. Perhaps 10 to 15 percent of these were replacements for fields that had reached the end of their useful life. Only a very small portion of these installations used alternative infills other than crumb rubber.

A growing number of synthetic turf athletic fields are reaching their end of life (EOL) and will need to be removed and replaced. Interest is growing in reusing or recycling crumb rubber and other field components; however, reuse of crumb rubber from replacement fields is still very rare in California. When it does occur, reuse reduces to a degree the amount of newly produced crumb rubber used. Other than occasional reuse of crumb rubber infill in the same field from which it was removed, no examples of recycling of synthetic turf field components at EOL in California were identified. Challenges to recycling EOL infill and other turf system components include the need to clean and