



# A Smooth Victory

New technology proves the wisdom of decision for S.C. paving specialist



On a project for which Banks Construction received a regional award for paving excellence, the Charleston, South Carolina company utilized SmoothRide, the Topcon intelligent paving solution, on a high-profile Charleston interstate highway. By project's end, they'd laid more than 42,000 tons of asphalt, shared some impressive benefits in cost savings, and gave Charleston residents a 30% improvement in rideability.

The project cited above, a 32-lane/mile resurfacing that included a series of seven bridges, took place on an 8-mile portion of the heavily traveled I-526 loop around Charleston. According to Trey Cox, P.L.S., Banks's survey manager, based on some disappointing results and repercussions from a previous milling job, they knew the job needed to be done differently.

"We'd done a job similar to this for the DOT and did it as a two-stage

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## Company

Banks Construction  
Charleston, South Carolina

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## Project

Highway resurfacing and cross-slope correction, Charleston, South Carolina

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## Topcon Products

SmoothRide intelligent paving solution

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## Topcon Dealer

Georgia Surveyors Exchange  
Savannah, Georgia

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milling operation," he said. "The problem here is that, once you mill a surface, the moisture and the cold temperatures cause the milled surface to crumble, leading to the risk of liability claims. We knew we could not tackle the I-526 job using the same techniques."

Banks turned to the SmoothRide intelligent paving solution from Topcon, feeling it would enhance the entire workflow of their asphalt operation – seamlessly incorporating highway-speed road scanning, variable-depth milling, and 3D paving. With that commitment, Cox and his team set to prove it out.

"We used the Topcon RD-M1 to scan a portion of I-26, and set a time for demonstration," said Cox. "Even though we did a very basic scanning session and job setup – it worked to perfection. At that point, I was all in for the I-526 job and went back to the DOT with a substantially lower bid number because of the reduced milling time, minimized need for traffic control, trucks, etc. And less time on the interstate reduces our safety exposures."

Cox finds particular appeal in the scanning aspect of the solution. It is there, he feels, that Banks has found – and will continue to find – the most benefits moving forward.



"SmoothRide provides what the paving industry has been wanting for years and never had: the ability to see what we are going to get into before getting into it," he said. A company like ours can get a milling job or a slope correction project and survey it, giving us a pretty good idea of what's needed, but we can never really know exactly what is going to happen until we get out there. This technology changes all that."

He added that, while SmoothRide has already proven itself as an outstanding milling and paving solution, that hardly scratches the surface of what can be done.

"We see a real benefit in scanning roads for as-built information," he said. "Using the RD-M1 to do that, not only eliminates the cost of lane closures, it keeps a survey crew out of the road. The safety factor it provides was almost as important in our decision-making process as streamlining the workflow. At Banks, safety cannot be overstated."



Banks quickly saw that the savings realized through the elimination of one complete milling run on an eight-mile, four-lane, project can be substantial.

"We cut 20 shifts out of the job by not having to mill ahead of time," said Cox. "That's a substantial reduction in per/night costs. Being able to gather as-built data while out there rather than at the end of the project was also huge. And there's

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simply not a way to put a number on the safety and liability. All of that together is the reason our owners believe that the SmoothRide solution was well worth the investment.

"As to who was the real winner of this award though, I'd have to say it was the Charleston-area residents who travel I-526 regularly – or daily. They've gotten something they've missed for some time now: a truly smooth ride."

"SmoothRide provides what the paving industry has been wanting for years and never had: the ability to see what we are going to get into, before getting into it."



A [full-length version](#) of this story is on the Topcon website.



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