

Effect of Taconite on Healing and Thermal Characteristics of Asphalt Binder

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Abstract: Based on the promoting effect of metal material on the healing property of asphalt binder, this study evaluated the merits of using taconite (an iron-containing filler from iron-mine tailings) to promote the healing performance of asphalt binder. Samples of asphalt binder modified with three different dosages of taconite were tested by a thermal conductivity (TC) device. The presence of taconite can provide TC values in asphalt mastic and thereby allow inductive heating to improve healing in asphalt pavement. Laboratory experiments were used to evaluate the healing property of asphalt mastic containing 10%, 20%, or 30% wt. taconite. The healing property was measured using a healing index based on the complex modulus. The TC values were tested using a new testing method, and then the relationship between TC values and healing performance was analyzed. In the range of content of taconite used in this study, thermal conductivity gradually increased with increased taconite. The results of the study showed that the presence of taconite improved the healing property of asphalt mastic. For healing time 900s, loading strain 5%, and degree of damage 50%, an increased dosage of taconite led to an increased healing property of modified asphalt binder, although the increase in the promoting effect on healing performance was not large. This study also evaluated the effect of several factors that influence the healing property of asphalt mastics. The content of taconite, the healing time, the loading strain level, and the degree of damage affected the healing performance of asphalt mastics modified by taconite. Since taconite is a by-product of mining iron-bearing sedimentary rock in which the iron minerals are interlayered with quartz, chert, or carbonate, our use of this so-called waste from mining and its application in construction is expected to promote resource conservation and recycling while enhancing sustainability in pavements.

Keywords: taconite, asphalt, rheology, healing, influencing factor, thermal conductivity

49 **1 Introduction**

50 Extending the service life of asphalt pavement through various modification procedures has been a
51 focus of the asphalt industry. Recently, the potential for healing cracks in asphalt pavement has
52 received increased attention (Ayar, 2016). To improve the healing property of asphalt binder,
53 studies have attempted to use microcapsules, hollow-fiber tubes, and nanoparticles (White et al.,
54 2002; Alvaro et al., 2010; Van der Zwaag et al., 2010; Schlangen et al., 2013; Santagata et al.,
55 2015 and 2016; Chen et al., 2015). In addition to liquid modifiers and polymers, there are solid
56 additives such as minerals and steel wool (Wang et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2016;
57 Norambuena-Contreras et al., 2016; Albert et al., 2020).

58
59 Taconite is a hard, dense, iron-bearing sedimentary rock composed of alternating chert and slate
60 units of varying thickness. Taconite contains an intimate mixture of quartz and magnetite (Fe_3O_4),
61 plus varying amounts of iron oxides, carbonates, and silicates (Davis, 1964). Studies have shown
62 that taconite can be added to an asphalt mixture to promote pavement performance, improving
63 damage resistance and structural strength (Moon et al., 2014; Dave et al., 2013; Zanko et al., 2003;
64 Clyne et al., 2010). Other studies found that mixtures prepared with taconite performed slightly
65 better than mixtures prepared with standard aggregates, as measured by a semi-circular bending
66 test and an indirect tensile test (Velasquez et al., 2009). Asphalt mastic containing 5% taconite
67 presents similar properties at low temperature and better performance at high temperature
68 compared to the corresponding asphalt binder. For example, asphalt mastic containing 5% taconite
69 has greater resistance to rutting at high temperature (Moon et al., 2014). But some researchers have
70 also pointed out that the use of up to 50% taconite in place of standard aggregate leads to a
71 moderate decrease in fatigue life and fracture resistance (Moon et al., 2019).

72
73 Adding thermal conductive fillers in polymers and asphalt binders is a practical approach to
74 increase thermal conductivity (TC) and raise the softening point (Chen et al., 2016; Tait et al.,
75 2011; Eskandarsefat et al., 2019). TC can influence the temperature of samples, and there is a
76 positive correlation between temperature and healing property at a special condition (Xiang et al.,
77 2019). So the introduction of metal fillers can promote the healing property of asphalt binder.
78 While there have been some studies on the effect of taconite on the thermo-mechanical properties
79 of asphalt binder, to the best of our knowledge, there are no studies on the effect of taconite on
80 asphalt binder's healing property.

81
82 It has been shown that an asphalt binder having a high healing capacity will have a better life span
83 (Li et al., 2020). An asphalt binder's healing capacity is affected by many factors such as
84 composition and aging status (Hung et al., 2020; Oldham et al., 2021). This paper investigated
85 whether the introduction of taconite to asphalt binder enhances the asphalt binder's healing
86 capacity. The results of the study showed that taconite can be a good additive for asphalt mastic to
87 improve its healing property by promoting its thermal conductivity. The thermal conductivity of
88 asphalt binder with several dosages of taconite was tested, and the relationship between the
89 thermal conductivity and the healing performance of the modified asphalt binder was analyzed.
90 Those results can enrich the understanding of the promoting effect of taconite on the healing
91 property of asphalt binder. The results can also increase the use of taconite.

92

93 2 Materials and Methods

94 2.1 Materials

95 The asphalt used in this study is PG 64-22 from HollyFrontier Corporation in Arizona (Table 1).
 96 Taconite was acquired through Minnesota Mine Tailing, MN. The properties of taconite are
 97 given in Table 2. Four dosages of taconite based on mass ratio (0%, 10%, 20%, 30%) were
 98 introduced to asphalt binder, then its self-healing property was evaluated for each dosage. To
 99 prepare the specimens, taconite was added to the asphalt binder and mixed for 5 min. Following
 100 that, each sample was stored for tests.

101

102 2.2 Evaluation of healing

103 To evaluate the healing property of asphalt binder samples containing taconite, a rheometry test
 104 was conducted using time sweep (loading-rest-loading) according to the DSR test in
 105 ASTM-D7552-09 (2019). Samples of 8-mm diameter and 2-mm thickness were tested at 25°C. It
 106 was found that when the loading strain was too small, it would take a long time to finish the
 107 loading test. But if the loading strain was too large, the sample would be damaged totally and
 108 quickly, leading to no healing phenomenon [Li et al., 2020]. A 5% loading strain and a 10 HZ
 109 loading frequency were applied to ensure that the asphalt binder was in a viscoelastic state (Lv et
 110 al., 2017). The test requires a minimum of three replicates; in this study, we chose to test five
 111 replicates to enhance the accuracy of results. Each sample was loaded until its complex shear
 112 modulus (G^*) was reduced to 50% of the initial value. The initial value was named as (G_0);
 113 50% of the initial value G_0 was named as (G_a). Then loading was stopped, and the sample was
 114 given a resting period of 900s. After the resting period, the new complex shear modulus was
 115 called G_b . The healing index was calculated using Equation 1 (Chen et al., 2018).

116

$$117 \quad HI = \frac{G_b - G_a}{G_0 - G_a}$$

118

119 where:

120 G_0 is the initial dynamic shear modulus at the beginning of the first loading,

121 G_a is the ending dynamic shear modulus before the resting interval, and

122 G_b is the new dynamic shear modulus after the resting period.

123

124 In order to explore the factors influencing the healing property of asphalt binder modified with
 125 taconite, the healing time, loading strain level, and degree of damage were chosen to evaluate the
 126 effects of those factors on healing performance.

127

128 2.3 Thermal conductivity test

129 The sample's mold for the thermal conductivity test was a cylinder with dimensions
 130 2.51cm(h)×1.95cm(r). The thermal conductivity of asphalt binders with different contents of
 131 taconite was determined based on the method developed by Obando and Kaloush (Obando et al.,
 132 2020). These are the steps of the experiment:

133 (1) Preheat the oven to 160°C.

134 (2) Put samples in the oven and heat them until they can be easily introduced into the mold.

135 (3) Pour samples into the testing mold (Figure 1). Ensure that the pouring process is slow, and
 136 ensure that the pouring height is slightly higher than the height of the mold.

- 137 (4) Place samples with mold in a flat position for a period of time to cool to room temperature,
138 being careful to avoid contaminating the surface of the test piece.
- 139 (5) Place samples in the cooling device for about 20 minutes, then remove the samples from the
140 mold, remove the excess asphalt binder on the edge, and pay attention to ensure that the
141 height of the samples is consistent.
- 142 (6) Make a small hole with a height of 2.5 cm in the middle of each sample to facilitate insertion
143 of the temperature sensor. Use white insulating foam sealant to seal around the temperature
144 sensor, to prevent air or water from entering, and to block the inflow of heating from above
145 the sample, which would affect the measurement.
- 146 (7) Put samples into a heating device with a water-bath temperature of 30°C (as shown in Figure
147 2). To ensure that the ambient temperature is consistent with the water-bath temperature,
148 place the entire device in a chamber at the same temperature.
- 149 (8) Stop the test after 2h, remove the device, export the data from the temperature sensor through
150 software, and calculate the thermal conductivity of samples using the computing method in
151 Obando and Kaloush.

152

153 **3 Results and Discussion**

154 **3.1. Effect of taconite dosage on healing property**

155 The dosages of taconite used were 0%, 10%, 20%, and 30%. The degree of damage was 50%, and
156 the healing temperature was 25°C. The healing index of each specimen was obtained after a
157 process of loading-healing-loading. It can be seen from Figure 3(a) that compared with the healing
158 index of asphalt binder modified with 10% taconite, the healing index of asphalt binder modified
159 with 30% taconite was higher by 5.4, when the healing time was 900s, the loading strain level was
160 5%, and the degree of damage was 50%. For all three content levels of taconite, the improvement
161 effect of taconite on the healing index of asphalt binder consistently increased with increasing
162 taconite dosage. The result differs from the research on the healing performance of asphalt binder
163 with pure Fe₂O₃ as a filler, where the trend in improvement was first increasing and then
164 decreasing (Li et al., 2020).

165

166 **3.2. Effect of healing time on healing property**

167 To study the effect of healing time on the healing property of asphalt binder modified with
168 taconite, the healing times used were 300s, 600s, and 900s, the degree of damage was 50%, and the
169 loading strain level was 5%. Five replicate tests were conducted, and three similar data were used
170 to compute the results. The results are shown in Figure 3(b).

171

172 Compared to a taconite concentration of 10%, the healing index for 30% taconite concentration
173 was higher by 6.97, 2.64, and 5.4 for healing times of 300s, 600s, and 900s, respectively. When
174 the taconite concentrations were respectively 10%, 20%, and 30%, the healing index of asphalt
175 mastic for 900s was higher than that for 300s by 25.15, 20.78, and 23.58. Thus, a longer healing
176 time led to better healing performance. This is mainly because a longer healing time results in
177 more heat storage, and there is more time to ensure that the asphalt binder flows to the damaged
178 location to complete the healing process.

179

180 3.3 Effect of loading strain on healing property

181 The magnitude of the loading strain influences the linear viscoelastic property of asphalt binder.
182 When the loading strain is too large, the fatigue performance of the asphalt material cannot be
183 reflected normally due to the small number of loading cycles (Shan, 2010). To study the effect of
184 loading strain on healing performance of asphalt mastic modified by taconite, three strain levels of
185 3%, 5%, and 7% were used to explore the healing performance of asphalt binders modified with
186 10%, 20%, or 30% taconite. The test temperature was 25°C, the healing time was 900s, and the
187 degree of damage was 50%. The test results are shown in Figure 3(c).

188 When the loading strain level was 3% or 7%, the asphalt binder with 20% taconite had the
189 strongest healing performance. When the strain level was 5%, as the content of taconite
190 increased, the healing index of the modified asphalt binder gradually improved. When the
191 loading strain level increased from 3% to 5% and then from 5% to 7%, the healing index of the
192 asphalt binder modified with 10% taconite changed by +11.11 and -28.41, respectively. As for
193 the asphalt binder with 30% taconite, the healing index changed by +9.64 and -37.14,
194 respectively. Based on those results, it can be concluded that there is a best loading strain level
195 among the three strain levels tested in this study, and when the loading strain level increased, the
196 influence of taconite on the healing index of modified asphalt binder showed a non-synchronous
197 growth trend. As the content of taconite in asphalt binder increased, the healing index of the
198 modified asphalt binder did not continue to increase under the 3% and 7% loading strain levels.
199 This is similar to the research results when asphalt binder was modified with Fe_2O_3 (Li et al.,
200 2020).

201 202 3.4 Effect of the degree of damage on healing property

203 Micro-crack damage in asphalt pavement can be partially or completely repaired when given
204 enough recovery time. However, when the damage is too large, to a certain extent it cannot be
205 repaired by depending only on the self-healing property of the asphalt binder. In order to explore
206 the degree of such healable damage, three damage degrees of 30%, 50%, and 70% were adopted as
207 the studied indicators, the healing time was 900s, the loading strain level was 5%, and the healing
208 property of a taconite-modified asphalt binder mixture was tested. Five replicate tests were
209 conducted and three similar data were used to compute the results. The results are shown in Figure
210 3(d).

211
212 When the content of taconite modification in asphalt binder was 10%, 20%, or 30%, and the degree
213 of damage was 30%, the healing index of asphalt mastic with 30% taconite was the best compared
214 to that of other two mastics. They were 38.3, 41.47, and 44.32, respectively. When the degree of
215 damage was 50%, the healing index values were 37.00, 39.14, and 42.4, respectively. When the
216 degree of damage was 70%, the healing index values were the worst: 13.02, 14.12, and 16.01,
217 respectively. When the degree of damage increased from 30% to 70%, the healing index of asphalt
218 binders modified with 10%, 20%, or 30% taconite was reduced by 25.28, 27.35, and 28.31,
219 respectively. Thus, an increase in the degree of damage led to a decrease in the healing index of
220 asphalt binder modified with taconite, and when the degree of damage was 70%, the healing index
221 of asphalt binder with taconite was sharply lower. Therefore, during the daily maintenance phase
222 of asphalt pavement, maintenance and repair should be carried out as soon as possible when the
223 road is in a low-damage condition, to prevent further deterioration that would shorten the service
224 life of the road.

225

226 3.5 Thermal characteristics

227 The thermal conductivity values for asphalt binders with different contents of taconite are shown
228 in Figure 4. When the content of taconite increased from 10% to 30%, the thermal conductivity
229 of modified asphalt binder increased from 0.1582W (m-K) to 0.1870W (m-K). This result shows
230 that the introduction of taconite into asphalt binder can increase the sensitivity of asphalt binder
231 to temperature, and in the content range of taconite explored in this study, the thermal
232 conductivity of modified asphalt binder would gradually increase with increasing content of
233 taconite. The optimal value for the content of taconite for thermal conductivity was not apparent.
234 That is due to the fact that taconite, as a metal filler including 15-30% iron composition, can
235 improve the thermal conductivity of asphalt mastic (DeDene et al., 2016). When the dosage of
236 taconite included in asphalt binder is increased, it would help make the distribution of taconite in
237 asphalt binder more even and further promote its thermal conductivity.

238 Higher thermal conductivity indicates that the heat can be absorbed more rapidly by the modified
239 asphalt binder, which increases the heat flux density. When the heat flux density is enhanced, it can
240 speed up the increasing of temperature. Besides, the healing behavior of asphalt is based on its
241 temperature. A higher temperature can decrease the viscosity and increase the rheological property
242 of asphalt binder; then it can flow to the damaged area to heal cracks. According to those theories,
243 the taconite can make the temperature of asphalt binder increase more quickly and get to a critical
244 point that drives asphalt binder to start the healing behavior.

245 Since thermal conductivity is an important factor that initiates crack healing, good thermal
246 conductivity of modified asphalt binder helps to promote crack healing. This result can also
247 briefly explain why an increase in taconite content led to an increase in the healing index of the
248 modified asphalt binder; there was no phenomenon of an optimal value of the healing ability as
249 reported in research for Fe_2O_3 -asphalt cement (Li et al., 2020). This can also show that the
250 self-healing test results of the asphalt binder modified with taconite are reliable.

251

252 4. Conclusion

253 This paper investigated whether the introduction of taconite as a filler to PG 64-22 asphalt binder
254 would enhance its healing property. It was found that taconite can be a good filler for asphalt
255 mastic to improve its healing property by promoting its thermal conductivity. Cracking and
256 subsequent healing are highly impacted by the properties of the binder and mastics rather than
257 the stone-aggregate skeleton (Shen et al., 2009). Therefore, this study focused on mastic-level
258 properties. Typically, 0%-50% mineral filler is used in common asphalt-mastic mixtures.
259 Therefore, we introduced 10%-30% taconite into asphalt binder to simulate the mastic portion of
260 asphalt pavement, excluding the stone-aggregate skeleton. The followings are the conclusions
261 drawn from this study:

262

- 263 • For healing time 900s, loading strain 5%, and degree of damage 50%, an increased dosage
264 of taconite led to an increased healing index of modified asphalt binder, although the
265 increase in the promoting effect on the healing performance was not large. This trend in
266 healing performance differed from the research results of asphalt binder with pure Fe_2O_3 as a
267 filler.

- 268 • A longer healing time led to better healing performance. Compared to 300s of healing time
269 for degree of damage 50%, the healing index for 900s healing time was higher by 25.15,
270 20.78, and 23.58 for taconite concentrations of 10%, 20%, and 30%, respectively.
- 271 • There was a best loading-strain level among the three strain levels used in this study; it was
272 5%. When the strain level increased, the influence of taconite on the healing performance of
273 asphalt binder showed a non-synchronous growth trend.
- 274 • When the degree of damage was 70%, the healing performance of asphalt binder with taconite
275 was sharply lower compared to when the degree of damage was 50%. Therefore, during the
276 daily maintenance phase of asphalt pavement, maintenance and repair should be carried out
277 as soon as possible while the road is in low-damage condition, to prevent the damage from
278 further deterioration that would shorten the service life of the road.
- 279 • The introduction of taconite can increase the sensitivity of asphalt binder to conduction
280 heating; in the content range of taconite explored in this study, thermal conductivity gradually
281 increased with increased taconite. It can be concluded that the improving effect of taconite on
282 healing performance is due to taconite's ability to enhance the thermal conductivity of
283 modified asphalt binder.

284

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293

294 **Data Availability Statement**

295 Some or all data, models, or code that support the findings of this study are available from the
296 corresponding author upon reasonable request.

297

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441 Table 1. Properties of asphalt binder (PG64-22) used in this study

Technical index	Value
Specific Gravity @15.6 °C	1.041
Cleveland Open Cup method Flash point °C	335
Mass change after RTFO@%	-0.013
Absolute Viscosity @ 60 °C, Pa.s	179

442

443 Table 2. Properties of taconite used in this study

Test Item	Result	Test Method
Specific Gravity (gr/cm ³)	2.803	AASHTO T84
Deleterious Materials	40-45%	AASHTO T176
Total % Absorption	1.5	AASHTO T84
Abrasion Resistance	< 40	AASHTO T96

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