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Daley pushes 'green' road salt

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BY [FRAN SPIELMAN](#) City Hall Reporter

Fed up with Chicago streets that look more like the surface of the moon, Mayor Daley said Wednesday he wants to join forces with other Midwest states and cities to purchase a more expensive, but less corrosive kind of de-icing salt.

"This salt is not environmentally friendly. It destroys everything. It destroys all your roads, the curbs, landscaping. It destroys your car. And if you ever fell in the street, it could slowly destroy all your clothes," Daley said.

"You put salt down. It gets warmer. The salt melts and goes into any spaces of concrete, erodes the concrete and you have potholes. You spend an enormous amount of money rebuilding all your roads.

"Next year, we're gonna be asking for the whole Midwest — all the states and cities — to buy environmentally friendly salt. That saves us an enormous amount of potholes."

While other cities are paying as much as \$140 a ton for rock salt to get through a second-straight brutal winter, Chicago has the luxury of a two-year contract that locked in prices at \$40 a ton.

Streets and Sanitation spokesman Matt Smith said he believes the environmentally friendly salt the mayor was talking about is known as "geo-melt."

It's a mix of sugar beet juice, without the sugar, salt water and calcium chloride that's mixed at city facilities, to hold down the cost to \$162 a ton and used sparingly.

"We put geo-melt down before a storm on bridge decks and overpasses — elevated structures that freeze up more quickly because of the wind whipping underneath. It doesn't replace salt. It just keeps the pavement safer longer and requires us to use less salt," Smith said.

"Right now, salt is still the cheapest game in town. But we have consistently tested environmentally friendly alternatives that are less corrosive. Unfortunately, they're also a little more costly than salt."

Last year, the city tested geo-melt on one lane of Lake Shore Drive — all the way from Hollywood to the South Side. It worked rather well, Smith said.

Even if a Midwest purchasing agreement could be worked out to bring down the cost of the rock salt alternative, Chicago would not be ready to make the citywide switch, Smith said.

"We have six spray trucks we spray it on with. If we were to expand to this, we would have