

What is a roundabout?

A roundabout is a type of circular intersection with yield control of entering traffic, islands on the approaches, and appropriate roadway curvature to reduce vehicle speeds.

Modern roundabouts are different from rotaries and other traffic circles. For example, roundabouts are typically smaller than the large, high-speed rotaries still in use in some parts of the country. In addition, roundabouts are typically larger than neighborhood traffic circles used to calm traffic.

A roundabout has these characteristics:



Why consider a roundabout?

Compared to other types of intersections, roundabouts have demonstrated safety and other benefits.

Roundabouts:

> Improve safety

- More than 90% reduction in fatalities*
- 76% reduction in injuries**
- 35% reduction in all crashes**
- Slower speeds are generally safer for pedestrians

> Reduce congestion

- Efficient during both peak hours and other times
- Typically less delay

> Reduce pollution and fuel use

- Fewer stops and hard accelerations, less time idling

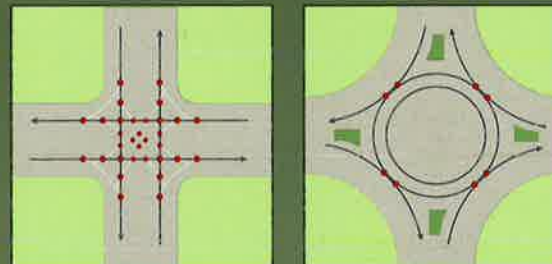
> Save money

- Often no signal equipment to install, power, and maintain
- Smaller roundabouts may require less right-of-way than traditional intersections
- Often less pavement needed

> Complement other common community values

- Quieter operation
- Functional and aesthetically pleasing

With roundabouts, head-on and high-speed right angle collisions are virtually eliminated.



[Traditional intersection]

[Roundabout]

● Potential vehicle conflict point

Tips for safely walking and biking through a roundabout

Walk around the outside; don't cross through the middle



Ride your bike as a vehicle or walk your bike as a pedestrian

Research is ongoing on additional treatments and design considerations to address the needs of visually impaired pedestrians.

“Personally, I love them, and I’ll tell you why. You only have to stop one lane of traffic, then go to the middle and wait. The cars can’t go much faster than 20 mph through the roundabout so the crossing aspect is great.”

Denise Haltom

School Crossing Guard, Suamico, Wisconsin
 Green Bay Press-Gazette
 February 6, 2001

“We have had a lot of people not very happy about the idea of roundabouts, but after they are constructed, those fears mostly go away.”

Brian Walsh

Washington State Department of Transportation
 Seattle Times
 June 5, 2002

“We all know people speed up to get through a yellow light. But at the roundabout, all the vehicles have to slow down ... we have almost 50 roundabouts now, we have a lot [fewer] personal injuries. We have fewer fatalities.”

James Brainard

Mayor, City of Carmel, Indiana
 www.nbc17.com
 November 8, 2007

Education is key.

Education is vital to the acceptance and success of a roundabout. Navigating a roundabout is easy. But because people can be apprehensive about new things, it’s important to educate the public about roundabout use.

There are just a few simple guidelines to remember when driving through a roundabout:

1. Slow down.
2. If there’s more than one lane, use the left lane to turn left, the right lane to turn right, and all lanes to go through, unless directed otherwise by signs and pavement markings.
3. Yield to pedestrians and bicyclists.
4. Yield at the entry to circulating traffic.
5. Stay in your lane within the roundabout and use your right-turn signal to indicate your intention to exit.
6. Always assume trucks need all available space — don’t pass them!
7. Clear the roundabout to allow emergency vehicles to pass.

Visit safety.fhwa.dot.gov to learn more about roundabouts


 U.S. Department of Transportation
 Federal Highway Administration

Design standards for roundabouts continue to evolve, and not all features of existing roundabouts meet current recommended practice. Please refer to FHWA’s web site for recommendations on current design practice.

Original source photo by Lee Rodegerdt. Photo has been altered to illustrate roundabout and updated signage.

Roundabouts

A Safer Choice

