What is a Roundabout?

A roundabout is a type of circular intersection, but is quite unlike a neighborhood traffic circle or large rotary. Roundabouts have been proven safer and more efficient than other types of circular intersections.

Roundabouts have certain essential distinguishing features:

- **Counterclockwise Flow.** Traffic travels counterclockwise around a center island.
- **Entry Yield Control.** Vehicles entering the roundabout yield to traffic already circulating.
- **Low Speed.** Curvature that results in lower vehicle speeds (15-25 mph) throughout the roundabout.

FHWA identified roundabouts as a Proven Safety Countermeasure because of their ability to substantially reduce the types of crashes that result in injury or loss of life. Roundabouts are designed to improve safety for all users, including pedestrians and bicycles. They also provide significant operational benefits compared to conventional intersections.

On average, roundabouts reduce severe crashes – those resulting in injury or loss of life – by 78-82%.

Educational Resources

Michigan “How to Use a Roundabout – Sharing the Road” Informational Brochure

New York Guidance for Roundabout Users
www.dot.ny.gov/main/roundabouts/guide-users/pedestrians

Washington State videos for Roundabouts and Pedestrians and Bicycles
www.wsdot.wa.gov/Safety/roundabouts/PedestriansCyclists.htm

Leveraging Partnerships

PEDSAFE Pedestrian Safety Guide & Countermeasure Selection System - Roundabouts
www.pedbikesafe.org/PEDSAFE/countermeasures_detail.cfm?CM_NUM=25

BIKESAFE Bicycle Safety Guide & Countermeasure Selection System – Roundabouts
www.pedbikesafe.org/BIKESAFE/countermeasures_detail.cfm?CM_NUM=17

Choosing Roundabouts for Safe Routes to School
www.saferoutesinfo.org/program-tools/case-study-bellingham-wa

AARP Livable Communities Fact Sheet Series

For More Information

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Lower speed.
Traffic speed at any road or intersection is vitally important to the safety of everyone, and especially non-motorized users. Lower speed is associated with better yielding rates, reduced vehicle stopping distance, and lower risk of collision injury or fatality. Also, the speed of traffic through a roundabout is more consistent with comfortable bicycle riding speed.

Less conflict. Roundabouts have fewer conflict points. A single lane roundabout has 50% fewer pedestrian-vehicle conflict points than a comparable stop or signal controlled intersection. Conflicts between bicycles and vehicles are reduced as well.

Shorter, setback crossings.
Pedestrians cross a shorter distance of only one direction of traffic at a time since the entering and exiting flows are separated. Drivers focus on pedestrians apart from entering, circulating and exiting maneuvers.

Features for All Users. Adding certain treatments at roundabouts can enhance the experience for both pedestrians and bicycles.

- At more complex roundabouts, such as those with multiple lanes, certain design elements and enhanced crossing treatments can improve accessibility for visually impaired pedestrians.

- Where bicycle facilities lead to a roundabout, providing an option to bicyclists to either ride in the travel lane or use a ramp to and from a separated shared use path.