

Teaching Through Children: How Bend, Oregon Used Coloring Books to Communicate About Roundabouts

Location

Bend, Oregon
(Pacific Northwest United States)

Implementation Stage

- ✓ Planning
- ✓ Design
- ✓ Construction
- ✓ Launch
- ✓ Post-Implementation

Roundabout Type/Setting

Single- and Multi-lane
Roundabouts in Urban and Rural
Settings

Target Audience

- ✓ General Public
- ✓ Cyclists/Pedestrians
- ✓ Large Vehicle Operators

Strategies Employed

- ✓ Coloring books with accompanying Lesson Plan for teachers for elementary schools
- ✓ Brochures targeting all roundabout users
- ✓ Video
- ✓ Website



Background

In 1997, the City of Bend, Oregon proposed their first roundabout and then quickly put the project on hold, due to overwhelmingly negative responses from the public, who were concerned about safely navigating a roundabout. Two years later, when the City decided to propose another new roundabout, that 1997 experience led them to develop a strategy to generate early public support for the project. To achieve this, the City developed a variety of outreach products to explain how roundabouts are easy to navigate and why the City was proposing the roundabout for that specific location.

In particular, City officials recognized a need to conduct outreach at a local school near the proposed roundabout. During public outreach meetings, some of the strongest resistance came from parents in the nearby school community, who expressed concern about building a roundabout near the school. The parents' consensus seemed to be "a roundabout is okay here, but not there at the school." Tailoring their outreach efforts to this particular audience, the City decided to develop a coloring book aimed at third-through fifth-grade children and their parents illustrating the safety and community benefits of roundabouts.

Approach

The City of Bend's approach to roundabout public outreach had an overarching focus—to make the public feel as comfortable with roundabouts as they feel with traditional intersections by showing them how roundabouts work, as well as their benefits and why they are the best intersection solution for a designated location.

The coloring book contained five "lessons:" basic roundabout terminology, signage in and near roundabouts, pedestrian crossings, navigating a roundabout as a bicyclist, and responding when an emergency vehicle approaches a roundabout. It presented the roundabout as "just another safe intersection," and showcased the safety advantages of roundabouts compared with traditional intersections. Following each lesson there was a fun quiz to reinforce key concepts covered in the activity book. City staff also developed an accompanying "lesson plan" that teachers could use to guide students through the coloring book. The City distributed the coloring books at the local school in the community of the proposed roundabout.

The coloring books complemented a series of additional public outreach products that were part of a comprehensive campaign, including:

- Brochures that targeted all roundabout user groups, including:
 - » Bicyclists – distributed to Countywide Bicycle Advisory Committee and bike shops
 - » Commercial truck drivers – distributed to Driver and Motor Vehicle offices and at freight advisory committee meetings
 - » Pedestrians – distributed to neighborhood action groups and schools
- Video about roundabouts that introduced terminology and key navigational concepts
- Website titled "Roundabouts – Another Safe Intersection," which provided information on current roundabout projects, frequently asked questions, and a link to each of the completed products discussed above.

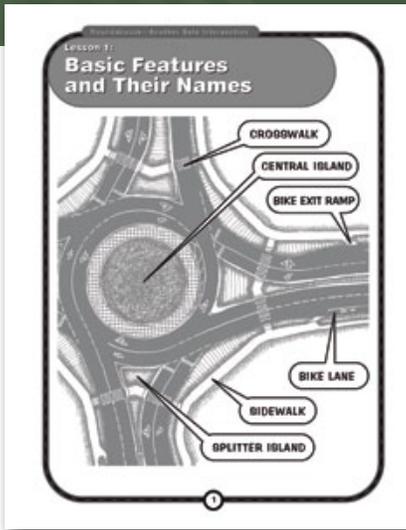


Figure 1: A sample page from the coloring book that Bend, Oregon used to educate children and their parents about roundabouts.

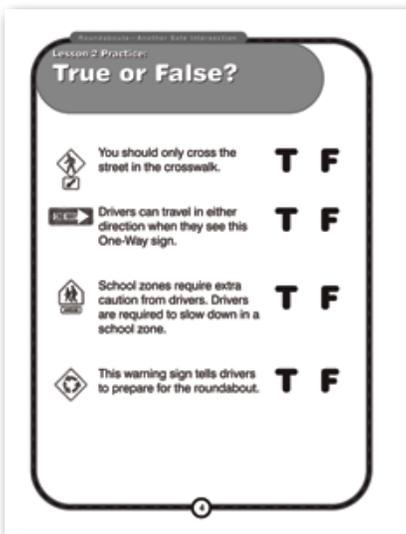


Figure 2: A sample quiz from Bend, Oregon's roundabout coloring book.

Results

The City found that much of the opposition to roundabouts was rooted in misunderstanding about roundabouts—many people confused roundabouts with traffic circles or rotaries. The City's public outreach successfully clarified the distinguishing characteristics of roundabouts, including why they are beneficial for Bend, and equipped citizens with the knowledge to use a roundabout safely and comfortably. As a result of the outreach through coloring books, the City constructed the roundabout near the school and has heard only positive feedback from parents since construction.

The coloring books effectively raised awareness and support for roundabouts by engaging parents who looked at the coloring books that their children brought home from school.

City staff concluded that the brochures helped increase public support for roundabouts, particularly among the groups targeted with each brochure.

As a result of the success of the comprehensive outreach efforts and the roundabouts themselves, City Transportation Engineer Robin Lewis noted that Bend classifies itself as a "roundabout-first city," meaning that during the design process, intersection planners are required to document why a roundabout would not work before they can proceed with a traditional intersection.

Lessons Learned

- Talk early and often to all stakeholders (including school communities, emergency medical service providers, etc.). It is much easier to get these groups behind the idea of roundabouts if they are involved from the beginning.
- In areas near schools where roundabouts are being proposed, involve the school district and teachers in the content development/conceptual design of educational outreach targeted toward children and their families to win their support and buy-in.

Outreach Investment

City of Bend, Oregon staff feel that the outreach products have been a very low-cost investment overall.

Related Products

Lesson Materials

Roundabouts – Another Safe Intersection Child's Activity Book
http://www.ci.bend.or.us/roundabouts/docs/Activity_book.pdf

Roundabouts – Another Safe Intersection Lesson Plan
http://www.ci.bend.or.us/roundabouts/docs/Activity_Book_Answer_Sheets.pdf

General Information Website

Roundabouts – Another Safe Intersection
<http://www.ci.bend.or.us/roundabouts/index.html>

Brochures

Roundabouts and Bicyclists – Making Safe Choices
http://www.ci.bend.or.us/roundabouts/docs/8607_bike_specific_brochure.pdf

Roundabouts – Another Safe Intersection General
http://www.ci.bend.or.us/roundabouts/docs/8607_general_brochure.pdf

Learn More

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