

VDOT's Roundabouts Review Committee Spearheads Internal and External Outreach Efforts

Location

State of Virginia
(Mid-Atlantic United States)

Implementation Stage

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

Roundabout Type/Setting

One-lane and two-lane roundabouts in urban, suburban, and rural areas.*

Target Audience

- ✓ General Public
- ✓ Elected Officials/Managers

Strategies Employed

- ✓ 15-week series of facts
- ✓ Video
- ✓ Website
- ✓ Inserts into Virginia Driver's Manual
- ✓ Brochure entitled VDOT Roundabouts – VDOT Answers Your Questions
- ✓ Public meetings/presentations
- ✓ Articles in newspapers and magazines
- ✓ Inserts into VDOT's Board of Supervisors Manual

* Twenty-five percent are being installed on primary routes, and 75 percent installed on secondary routes—local streets and residential routes



Background

In 2003, when the Virginia legislature passed a resolution encouraging the consideration of roundabouts as an alternative to signalized intersections where feasible, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) quickly realized it needed to accelerate its efforts on implementing roundabouts into intersection safety policies across the State. Because there were only a few VDOT engineers with roundabouts experience, leadership realized it would be necessary to create internal guidance and conduct educational outreach for its own staff, and it would need to begin educating the public about these new, unfamiliar round intersections. VDOT's Central Office created a Roundabouts Review Committee to spearhead these efforts and provide technical reviews, subject matter expertise, and a range of public outreach efforts addressing issues and concerns associated with individual roundabout projects.

Approach

VDOT has used a variety of methods to reach out to the public and promote modern roundabouts. Its Roundabouts Review Committee released a 15-week series of roundabout facts to the public via the VDOT website. The committee also created a mailing list of VDOT staff interested in learning more about roundabouts who received the facts directly via email. These facts were presented as simple, one- to two-page flyers that provided information about various aspects of roundabouts. Topics ranged from roundabout benefits to interesting facts presented at conferences to interesting news stories about roundabouts, from public radio, for example. The facts themselves are short blurbs with photos or a story about a new roundabout in the State to increase readability. They were originally emailed to everyone from the governor and VDOT staff to local engineers.

VDOT also submitted articles to local newspapers and magazines in areas where roundabouts were planned and developed a video on the "Virginia Experience with Roundabouts" to supplement outreach. The video, created with the help of Washington State DOT and the Virginia Department of Education, informed viewers about key design elements and operational characteristics of roundabouts, benefits of

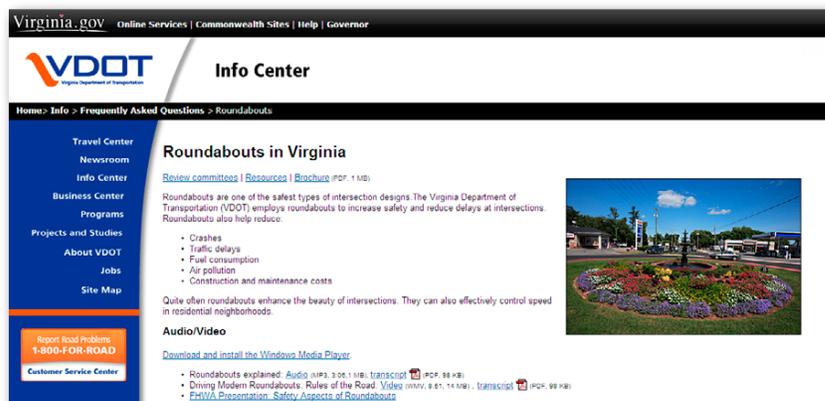


Figure 1: VDOT's roundabout website highlights the 15-week roundabout FAQ series on the homepage.

- Roundabouts have been around forever - **false**
- Roundabouts are unsafe to Pedestrians and Bicyclists - **false**
- The public avoids using Roundabouts - **false**
- They are unsafe next to schools - **false**

Figure 2: Sample slide from VDOT's public outreach presentation.

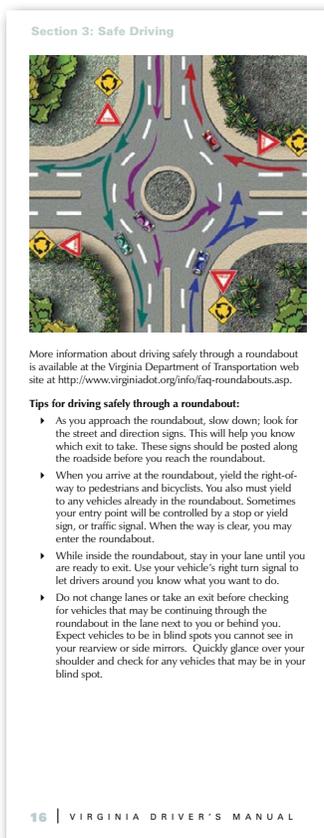


Figure 3: Roundabout information from Virginia's DMV driver's manual.

Learn More

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roundabouts, and how to safely navigate a roundabout. The video also provided a link to a brochure, titled VDOT Roundabouts – VDOT Answers Your Questions. In addition, VDOT updated the State's driving manual to include driving tips for roundabouts and integrated a section on roundabouts into the Virginia Board of Supervisors Manual, which is distributed to every county in the State as a reference guide to VDOT responsibilities.

Results

VDOT considers its outreach activities to be very successful to date, and notes that there have been many occasions in which the Roundabouts Review Committee attended public outreach meetings where the community's initial sentiment toward roundabouts was very negative. However, once the presentation had been given, questions had been answered, and misconceptions had been corrected, community members generally became enthusiastic supporters of roundabout construction in their area.

Lessons Learned

- Public outreach efforts should not take a "one-size-fits-all" format. Outreach efforts are most successful when they are tailored to address specific local concerns or "hot button" issues for the proposed roundabout location.
- Deliberate, sustained, and redundant outreach is extremely beneficial for helping audiences absorb the information.
- Conversations with other states to understand the issues they have faced and effective practices they have used can help an agency anticipate and resolve problems before they arise. For example, the input provided by Washington State DOT for the VDOT video that teaches young drivers how to navigate a modern roundabout was vital to that cost-effective effort.
- Providing examples of existing roundabouts that closely match the location where a proposed roundabout project is being considered is a useful practice.

Outreach Investment

VDOT's Roundabouts Review Committee structure and activities are very low-cost, involving limited investment in developing the outreach tools. Individual VDOT divisions around the state cost-effectively execute the majority of outreach activities surrounding the implementation of a roundabout using materials developed by VDOT through this outreach effort.

Related Products

Manuals

Board of Supervisors Manual

http://www.virginiadot.org/business/resources/local_assistance/2010BOS_Manual_final.pdf

Virginia DMV Driver's Manual

<http://www.dmv.state.va.us/webdoc/pdf/dmv39.pdf>

General Information Website

Roundabouts in Virginia

<http://www.virginiadot.org/info/faq-roundabouts.asp>

Roundabout Facts

<http://www.virginiadot.org/info/faq-roundabouts.asp>

Brochure

"Roundabouts: VDOT Answers Your Questions"

<http://www.virginiadot.org/info/resources/Roundabouts.pdf>