

### **Q1: Roundabouts, rotaries, traffic circles – they're all the same, aren't they?**

No. Other than sharing a circular shape, a modern roundabout operates much differently than other traffic circles, including rotaries. A modern roundabout requires entering traffic to yield the right-of-way to traffic already in the roundabout. This keeps the traffic in the roundabout constantly moving and prevents much of the gridlock that plagues rotaries, for example. Modern roundabouts are also much smaller than rotaries and thus operate at safer, slower speeds. The design of a modern roundabout allows capacities comparable to signals but with generally a higher degree of safety

### **Q2: Why do roundabouts need to be so big?**

The size of a roundabout is determined by capacity needs, the size of the largest vehicle, the need to achieve appropriate speeds throughout the roundabout, and other factors. To handle typical trucks with overall wheelbases of 45 feet or more, a single-lane roundabout needs to be at least 120 feet in diameter and is typically 100 to 135 feet in diameter. One advantage of the roundabout is that it often requires less overall space, since they generally don't require auxiliary lanes for turning movements.

### **Q3: Aren't traffic signals safer than roundabouts for pedestrians?**

It depends on the amount of pedestrians and vehicles. In many cases a roundabout can offer a safer environment for pedestrians than a traffic signal because the pedestrian crossing at a roundabout is reduced to two simple crossings of one-way traffic moving at slow speeds. A pedestrian crossing at a traffic signal still needs to contend with vehicles turning right or left on green, vehicles turning right on red, and vehicles running the red light. The latter of these potential conflicts occur at high speeds and often result in injuries or fatalities to pedestrians.

### **Q4: Are roundabouts safe near schools?**

Several roundabouts have been installed near schools in the United States, including locations in Montpelier, Vermont; Howard, Wisconsin; University Place, Washington; and Kennewick, Washington. None has reported any significant problems. For the Howard, Wisconsin, location, prior to the opening of the roundabout, the school required all school children to arrive by bicycle or car because it was unsafe to cross the street. Since the roundabout opened, children now have a safe crossing location, aided by a crossing guard.

### **Q5: Are roundabouts appropriate everywhere?**

No. The choice of using a roundabout versus a traffic signal is a case-by-case decision. A community must evaluate each candidate intersection individually to determine whether a roundabout or a traffic signal is more effective.

### **Q6: I drive a big truck, and that roundabout looks awfully tight. Will I fit?**

Yes. Roundabouts have been designed specifically to accommodate large vehicles such as yours. Roundabouts generally include truck aprons, which are typically elevated, colored and/or textured and located just inside the main circulatory roadway and are designed to accommodate the rear axles of your truck as you navigate through the roundabout. As you approach the roundabout, stay close to the left side of the entry. As you exit, again stay close to the left side of the exit.

At a multilane roundabout, very large trucks you may need to occupy the entire circulatory roadway to make the turn. Signal your intention in advance and claim both lanes on approach to the roundabout.

**Q7: I'm driving in a multilane roundabout. How do I choose which lane to enter and exit?**

In general, approach a multilane roundabout the same way you would approach any other intersection. If you want to turn left, use the left–most lane and signal that you intend to turn left. If you want to turn right, use the right–most lane and signal that you intend to turn right. In all cases, pass counterclockwise around the central island. When preparing to exit, turn on your right turn signal as you pass the exit before the one you want to use.

**Q8: What should I do when I'm in a roundabout when an emergency vehicle arrives?**

Exit the roundabout at the nearest exit and pull over to the right and stop. Do not stop in the roundabout as you might block the path of a large emergency vehicle.

**Q9: How about cycling through a roundabout?**

A cyclist has a number of options at a roundabout, and your choice will depend on your degree of comfort riding in traffic. The speed of cars through a roundabout are typically 15 to 25 mph, close to the speed you ride your bicycle. You can choose to either circulate as a vehicle or use the sidewalk around the roundabout. When circulating as a vehicle, be sure to ride near the middle of the lane so that drivers can see you and will not attempt to pass you. Remember that cars will be traveling at speeds similar to your speeds. Just like for the motorized vehicles, you should not change lanes once you're in the roundabout and you should signal when you exit the roundabout.

**Q10: What about snow removal at roundabouts?**

A number of communities in snowy areas have installed roundabouts, including Hamilton, Ontario, Kemptville, Ontario, Howard (Green Bay), Wisconsin; Montpelier, Vermont; and Vail, Colorado. All have indicated that while there is some initial adjustment in procedures for snowplow crews, roundabouts generally present no major problems for snow removal. In Howard, Wisconsin, for example, one truck will start on the truck apron and plow around the roundabout to the outside, while another truck will plow each entry and exit, pushing the snow to the outside. Roundabouts make it easier to turn snowplows as well.

Driving Modern Roundabouts - City of Lacey, WA

<http://ci.billings.mt.us/DocumentView.aspx?DID=3807>

Billings Roundabout PSA - July 2008

<http://ci.billings.mt.us/DocumentView.aspx?DID=3771>