

Roundabout general talking points

General

Why is the Wisconsin Department of Transportation building more roundabouts?

Roundabouts provide safer and more efficient traffic flow than standard intersections by slowing traffic down and keeping traffic moving one way in a counterclockwise direction.

Roundabouts are the most efficient form of intersection. Motorists aren't wasting fuel and adding more greenhouse gases to the environment like a vehicle that has to remain stopped at a traffic signal.

Aesthetically, they can be visually appealing with plantings in the central island.

There are fewer conflict points (8 vs 32 in a single-lane roundabout) and crash statistics from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety show that roundabouts reduce fatal crashes about 90%, injury crashes about 75%, and overall crashes about 35%.

Gannett Wisconsin Media reported that it:

“reviewed crash data from four roundabouts in the Fox Cities and found that they live up to their billing as a safer alternative to intersections controlled by traffic lights or stop signs. The construction of a roundabout at Wisconsin 55- Outagamie County KK south of Kaukauna has resulted in a 69 percent decrease in crashes and an 88 percent decrease in injury and fatal crashes since it opened in 2006, when compared with data from the previous six years...

Neenah has seen similar results at its three roundabouts. Before the roundabouts were constructed, Neenah averaged 8.2 crashes annually at the three intersections. Since the roundabouts opened, the city has averaged 2.5 crashes a year, a 70 percent drop.”

General rules

How do I drive a roundabout?

Whether approaching a regular intersection or a multi-lane roundabout, the same general rules apply: If making a left turn, get into the left lane; if turning right, get into the right lane. If going straight ahead, follow the pavement markings and black and white signs. Also:

- Slow down and obey traffic signs
- Yield to pedestrians and bicyclists as you approach the roundabout
- Yield to traffic on your left that's already in the roundabout
- Enter the roundabout when there is a safe gap in traffic
- Keep your speed low within the roundabout and stay in your lane
- As you approach your exit, turn on your right turn signal
- Yield to pedestrians and bicycles as you exit

Emergency vehicles

What should I do if a fire engine or other emergency vehicle approaches from behind as I'm driving through or nearing a roundabout?

If you have not entered the roundabout, pull over to the right and allow the emergency vehicles to pass.

If you have already entered the roundabout, continue to your exit, then pull over to the right and allow the emergency vehicle(s) to pass.

Avoid stopping in the roundabout.

Remember, an emergency vehicle can't get through the roundabout any faster than you can.

Pedestrians

I need access to a destination on the other side of a roundabout. How do I get there?

Pedestrians should use the crosswalks at the approaches to the roundabout. They should not enter the center of the roundabout itself.

Using the crosswalk, pedestrians should first look to their left to watch for a gap in traffic or to wait for vehicles to stop to allow them to cross. They should then cross to the safety/splitter island.

The safety/splitter island is where pedestrians can stop and check traffic coming from the right, where they can again watch for a gap in traffic or wait for vehicles to stop to allow them to cross.

Pedestrians should always stay alert, as they would at any other intersection, and never step in front of moving vehicles.

WisDOT is not aware of any pedestrian fatalities occurring in a roundabout anywhere in the country.

Visually impaired pedestrians

What is WisDOT doing to accommodate someone who is visually impaired safely cross a street at a roundabout?

Pedestrians who are blind have been shown to have more difficulty finding the crosswalks at roundabouts, and once at a crosswalk, have some difficulty determining when it is safe to cross.

Where there is an identified or demonstrated need to accommodate a visually impaired individual, the department will handle the situation on a case-by-case basis, up to and including working with the visually-impaired individual on potential remedies, such as looking at alternative crossings and improving them, installing raised pedestrian crossings, working with local transit to relocate bus stops, and installing a pedestrian-activated signal or beacon - also referred to as a pedestrian hybrid signal/beacon.

Crosswalks at roundabouts currently meet all Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. That includes installing curb ramps and detectable warning fields (truncated domes).

However, a national study, (NCHRP 3-78A) is underway to try to determine how to design multilane roundabouts to be more pedestrian friendly, especially for the visually impaired. No conclusions from the study are currently available.

Bicycles

I ride a bicycle. How do I use a roundabout?

If you are riding on the shoulder or bike lane, merge into the traffic lane before the shoulder ends.

Signal your intent to move into traffic.

Once inside the roundabout, don't hug the curb; ride close to the middle of the lane to prevent vehicles from passing and cutting you off.

Watch for vehicles waiting to enter the roundabout, as they may not see you.

If you do not want to ride your bike in the roundabout, use the sidewalk and crosswalks.

Large trucks

How does a semi get through a roundabout?

Large trucks, because of their size, need more space when driving in a roundabout and will likely encroach into other lanes when making turns.

All drivers should avoid driving next to or passing large trucks when approaching and maneuvering through a roundabout so the truck can safely make its turn.

There is a "truck apron" on the edge of the center island in a roundabout that a semi trailer's or other large vehicle's wheels may use. The truck apron helps longer vehicles navigate the roundabout. Other vehicles are not allowed to drive on the truck apron. Truck aprons are usually tinted a brick red color and might be stamped to look like paving bricks.

Information

Where can I get more information about roundabouts?

More information on roundabouts is available at www.wisconsinroundabouts.gov

More information on roundabout studies are available at:

Kansas Department of Transportation: <http://www.ksdot.org>, then click on "Publications & Reports," then search for "roundabouts." The report is named: "A study of the effect of ADA accessibility on Kansas roundabouts."

<http://www.access-board.gov/research/roundabouts/bulletin.htm>. The Access Board's report is entitled: "Pedestrian access to modern roundabouts: Design and operational issues for pedestrians who are blind."