

# Roundabouts and You

## Clark County Public Works

### September 2011

The first roundabout in unincorporated Clark County is at NE 10th Avenue and NE 136th Street. The single-lane roundabout is part of the [Salmon Creek Interchange Project](#), a partnership between Clark County Public Works and the Washington State Department of Transportation. The roundabout is southwest of the new Park & Ride, which is tentatively slated to open for bus riders on Sunday, Sept. 25.

Some drivers may have limited experience with roundabouts and have questions about how they work or why Clark County constructed one as part of the interchange project.

#### Why roundabouts?

Roundabouts are being built here, in other parts of Washington and across the nation because they effectively move traffic and reduce vehicular conflicts, thereby improving safety. They slow down vehicles without requiring them to stop and wait for a traffic signal to cycle. They also eliminate left turns, which improves safety and reduces delay.

The Washington State Department of Transportation's website indicates there are about 120 roundabouts in the state, with many more being planned.

#### Safety benefits

With a roundabout, head-on and T-bone collisions are virtually eliminated because vehicles move in one direction with no left turns. Any accidents tend to be less-serious sideswipe crashes. Lower traffic speeds further reduce the chance of injury or death.

Safety benefits have been documented by before-after conditions. Intersections where a roundabout replaced a stop sign or traffic signal have recorded major improvements, including:

- A 35 percent to 40 percent reduction in traffic collisions.
- A 75 percent to 80 percent reduction in injury collisions.
- A 90 percent reduction in fatal collisions.

Roundabouts typically are safer for pedestrians. Crosswalks are set back, which gives drivers more time to spot and react to pedestrians. Islands at the entrances and exits further slow traffic and give pedestrians a safe place to wait when crossing only one lane at a time.

#### Other benefits

- Less congestion and delay, during peak travel periods (rush hour) and other times.
- Reduced emissions and fuel use, with fewer starts and stops and less idling.
- Often lower construction costs, with no traffic signals and sometimes less asphalt.
- Reduced traffic noise.
- More aesthetically pleasing.



The county's first roundabout is part of the Salmon Creek Interchange Project.

## Why build one in Salmon Creek?

The decision to build a single-lane roundabout at NE 10th Avenue and NE 136th Street was based on computer modeling that examined traffic volumes and driver delay. The county concluded a traffic signal at that location would be too close to the existing signal at NE 10th Avenue and NE Tenney Road to provide sufficient queuing room for vehicles during peak periods. A traffic signal also would have required additional land for left-turn lanes, which would have increased the project's footprint and overall cost. In addition, stop signs could not handle peak traffic volumes exiting the Park & Ride.

## Rules of the road for driving single-lane roundabouts

- When approaching a roundabout, slow down, look for pedestrians and cyclists and be prepared to stop.
- Obey all traffic signs.
- Yield to pedestrians crossing the road.
- Always yield to traffic already in the roundabout. If there are no vehicles, cyclists or pedestrians, you can proceed into the roundabout without stopping.
- Drive only in a counter-clockwise direction while in the roundabout.
- Use your right-turn signal when exiting and look for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Don't be alarmed if you see a truck with its back wheels on the center island curbing. This truck apron is built precisely for that purpose.
- If you see or hear a fire engine or emergency vehicle approaching, do not stop. Drive out of the roundabout, pull over to the right when there is room to safely do so and allow the vehicle to pass.

## Public opinion

Some people are unfamiliar with roundabouts and have an initial negative reaction that quickly changes to a positive one. In surveys conducted in three states (Kansas, Maryland and Nevada), 55 percent of respondents were either "strongly" or "somewhat" opposed to roundabouts before construction.

Once roundabouts were in place, public opinion shifted dramatically, with 63 percent of respondents either "strongly" or "somewhat" favoring roundabouts. In these surveys, the percentage of respondents "strongly opposed" decreased from 41 percent before construction to only 15 percent after construction.

## Web links

Washington State Department of Transportation  
(Includes five-part video series on roundabouts)  
[www.wsdot.wa.gov/safety/roundabouts](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/safety/roundabouts)

City of Sammamish, Washington  
(Includes computer roundabout demonstration)  
[www.ci.sammamish.wa.us/tools/roundaboutdemo.aspx](http://www.ci.sammamish.wa.us/tools/roundaboutdemo.aspx)

Federal Highway Administration  
[safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/roundabouts](http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/roundabouts)

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety  
[www.iihs.org/research/topics/roundabouts.html](http://www.iihs.org/research/topics/roundabouts.html)

Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington  
[www.mrsc.org/subjects/transpo/roundabouts.aspx](http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/transpo/roundabouts.aspx)

Oregon State Department of Transportation  
[egov.oregon.gov/odot/hwy/engservices/roundabout\\_home.shtml](http://egov.oregon.gov/odot/hwy/engservices/roundabout_home.shtml)

New York State Department of Transportation  
[www.nysdot.gov/main/roundabouts](http://www.nysdot.gov/main/roundabouts)



A truck uses the center apron, which is specifically designed to help large vehicles complete their turns.

