

Norfolk Insider

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“The Safety of Roundabouts”



In 1997, there were only about 200 roundabouts in the United States. It's estimated there are now 3500 roundabouts located throughout the country. Norfolk is one of those communities that will soon add another roundabout to its streets. In addition to the current roundabouts located at 7th and Pasewalk; 18th and Pasewalk; and 25th and Benjamin there will soon be a new roundabout located at the intersection of Victory Road and Norfolk Avenue.

Most communities' main reason for installing a roundabout rather than a traffic signal or four way stop is safety related. In contrast to a typical intersection it is nearly impossible to have a head-on or T-bone collision in a

roundabout. If there would be a collision, it would be of less severity because it would occur at lower speeds- typically 15-20 miles per hour. Because there is a constant flow of traffic, roundabouts take away the danger of motorists running red lights- a common cause of traffic accidents. There are less rear end crashes in a roundabout as vehicles are not stopping in the intersection.

Less time is spent sitting at a roundabout than at a typical traffic signal which saves drivers time and fuel. As long as there is no oncoming traffic, a driver doesn't need to stop and can enter the roundabout allowing for the intersection to handle more traffic at one time.

Roundabouts are considered more aesthetically pleasing. The installation of a roundabout eliminates the need for maintenance, equipment and electrical costs associated with a traffic signal. In the event of a power outage, a roundabout can be used without the danger associated with an intersection in which the traffic signals are not functioning.

According to the Federal Highway Administration, the installation of a roundabout at an intersection where stop signs or traffic signals were used typically reduces injury crashes by 75 percent. Studies show there is usually a 37 percent reduction in overall collisions, a 90 percent reduction in fatality collisions and a 40 percent reduction in pedestrian collisions when a roundabout is used at an intersection rather than a traffic signal or stop signs.

For more information about roundabouts visit the following websites:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MywmtskFiil> or <http://www.azdot.gov/ccpartnerships/Roundabouts/index.asp>.