

All about roundabouts

Frequently Asked Questions

(Summer 2021)

What is a roundabout?

A roundabout is a type of circular intersection that uses yield signs to control traffic entering the intersection.

Roundabouts are designed with curved entrances to reduce speeds and to reduce high-speed head-on, right-angle and turning crashes, which improves safety.



Roundabouts can range in size from a small, one-lane roundabout to a large, multi-lane roundabout. Above are two examples of roundabouts in Oregon.

Do roundabouts increase safety?

According to the Federal Highway Administration, roundabouts are safer than traditional intersections. Locations with roundabouts can see a:

- 90 percent reduction in fatalities.
- 76 percent reduction in injuries.
- 35 percent reduction in all crashes.

The circular shape of the intersection reduces speed. Additional benefits from a roundabout include:

- Lower maintenance costs.
- Increased fuel efficiency.
- Lower severity of collisions when they occur, resulting in significantly fewer severe and fatal injuries.
- Fewer vehicle and pedestrian conflict points than a stop sign controlled or signalized intersection.

Can trucks/buses/farm equipment use a roundabout?

Yes. A roundabout is designed for the traffic that needs to travel through it, which often includes school buses, freight and, in some cases, farm equipment.

Truck aprons, which are mountable concrete surfaces next to the travel lanes, are included in the design to allow larger vehicles extra room to navigate the roundabout.

Roundabouts are used around the country and in

many locations within Oregon. They range in sizes to meet the needs of their locations and users. If you are concerned about a particular vehicle navigating a future roundabout, please reach out to the project team.

How do drivers know how to use them?

Roundabouts are included in the Oregon Driver Manual and are a common traffic treatment in many places. Signs and pavement markings help inform drivers of what to do when approaching or driving in a roundabout. In addition, we provide safety information alongside project information. Find information about using a roundabout on the reverse side of this handout.

Why not install a traffic signal?

Project teams study intersections to determine which treatments would work best.

While a traffic signal may facilitate all the directions of traffic and turns, installing new traffic signals can result in an increase in rear-end crashes. In rural areas, new traffic signals are associated with a 77 percent reduction in angle crashes, but also a 58 percent increase in rear-end crashes, which can be severe and fatal in high-speed areas. Traffic signals do not address speeds at an intersection - roundabouts do reduce speeds. Often drivers accelerate through an intersection to try to make it through before the signal turns red, which is dangerous.

For more information:

Contact Ask ODOT
1 (888) 275-6368
Ask.ODOT@odot.oregon.gov

For ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) or Civil Rights Title VI accommodations, translation/interpretation services, or more information call TTY 800-735-2900 or Oregon Relay Service 7-1-1.

Using a roundabout safely



For people driving:

The following steps will help you travel safely through a roundabout.

1 Approach

Slow down as you approach the roundabout. Look for signs to determine where your exit is located. Watch for people on bikes; they will either merge into traffic or use the sidewalk.

When approaching the crosswalk, stop for pedestrians using the crosswalk in your lane.

2 Enter

Traffic in the roundabout has the right-of-way. Before you enter the roundabout, you must yield to traffic inside and exiting the roundabout.

Wait for a gap and merge into traffic. Be prepared to stop if necessary.

3 Proceed

Once inside the roundabout, move around the circle until you reach your exit.

Allow bicycles that have merged into traffic the full travel lane and don't pass.

4 Exit

Indicate your plan to exit using your right turn signal.

Watch for people in the crosswalk and be prepared to stop.



Tips for Multi-lane Roundabouts

Roundabouts may have one or more lanes. Here are a few tips to help you safely negotiate a multi-lane roundabout:

Lane Choice

Prior to entering the roundabout, pay close attention to exit and lane use signs, along with pavement markings. Like at any other intersection, get into the correct lane as you approach the roundabout. Look for signs for which lane you need to be in for your exit. Once you've chosen the proper lane for your destination, you shouldn't need to change lanes in the roundabout.

Do Not Pass

Do not attempt to overtake or pass any vehicles, especially large trucks and trailers within the roundabout. Trucks may need to straddle both lanes. It is illegal to pass or drive beside a truck within the roundabout.

Emergency Vehicles in Roundabouts

Do not enter a roundabout when emergency vehicles are approaching. Pull over to the right. Allow other vehicles to clear the intersection so the emergency vehicles can move through the roundabout. Never stop while inside the roundabout. Instead, move through and exit the roundabout. Once you exit, pull over to the right shoulder and allow emergency vehicles to pass.

For people riding a bike:

You can navigate the roundabout like a motor vehicle would, or use the sidewalk and crosswalks. If you use the sidewalk, yield to people walking, travel at a walking speed or walk your bike.

For people using the sidewalk:

Stay on the sidewalk or in designated crosswalks. When preparing to cross, watch for oncoming vehicles to make sure they stop for you before proceeding. Cross one direction of travel at a time and wait at the islands in the crosswalk until your path is clear.

