

THE REAL on Roundabouts

Let's face it, roundabouts tend to get a bad rap. The prospect of dealing with inconvenient construction delays, followed by a change in traffic flow that literally sends folks in circles while forcibly curbing typical bedroom community driving speeds is not exactly appealing. Sprinkle on top the fact that change itself is difficult for most, and we've just served up a bittersweet recipe for public consumption.

The sweet part of the deal is change for the better is always good. Reducing the risks motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians face as they travel our City streets is a priority. Saving the lives of loved ones, neighbors, and visitors who just want to get where they need to be is a necessity. Roundabouts accomplish this by slowing down drivers and significantly reducing the frequency and severity of collisions. Case in point — the roundabout at Avenue L and Challenger Way reduced the average number of serious injury collisions in that intersection from more than six annually to zero. The numbers don't lie; that area is a safer place to navigate due to its roundabout.

Besides reducing speeds and aggressive driving tendencies, roundabouts also save money, increase traffic flow, and improve air quality. Traffic signals require long-term maintenance costs. The Challenger Way roundabout saves the City \$15,000 per year by eliminating signal maintenance. What's more, while traffic certainly moves at a slower pace when approaching and utilizing the roundabout, brief pauses replace extended wait times at red lights (and ease the eminent road rage that comes from sitting at a light with zero cross traffic in sight).



Traffic management is more organized and timely — allowing more vehicles to traverse the intersection in the same amount of time as a signaled juncture.

As if all of this isn't incentive enough to give roundabouts a thumbs-up, they also cut down vehicular emissions and fuel consumption by reducing vehicle idle time at intersections.

With so much to gain from a safety, efficiency, and cost perspective, the City has identified additional sites that will benefit greatly from an intersection roundabout upgrade. Two such locations are on Lancaster Boulevard, one at 15th Street West and the other at 15th Street East. On the west end, traffic heading to downtown Lancaster's cultural hub, The BLVD, has significantly increased since the area's revitalization. Additionally, 15th Street West not only connects to freeway ramps, it also hosts a number of destination organizations, including schools, churches, restaurants, stores, and several healthcare facilities.

On the east end, there has been a hike in traffic volume and collisions in the vicinity of 15th Street East and Lancaster Boulevard over the past few years.

Adding roundabouts to these two intersections will greatly reduce risks, increase safety, and improve traffic flow for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians alike.

Yes — change is tough. However, not making strides to create a safer, higher quality community for all who live, work, and visit here is not an option for the City. The inconveniences of a new and different approach fades in comparison to protecting each other from harm's way. That is the real on roundabouts.

