

## **What are Roundabouts?**

Modern roundabouts are circular intersections that evolved from the older traffic circles in place across much of the North America and Europe. Roundabouts differ from "traffic circles" in that they are generally more compact and have slower travel speeds. Driving a modern roundabout may also be different than some traffic circles across the U.S., because rules of the right-of-way at some traffic circles differ from others. This is in contrast to modern roundabouts, where operation is principally the same at each one.

## **How do I Drive Through A Modern Roundabout?**

Driving through a modern roundabout can be somewhat intimidating at first. But by observing the advisory signs and keeping in mind a few simple rules, negotiating your way through a roundabout is very simple:

### **1. Slow down when approaching a roundabout.**

Modern roundabouts are designed for slower vehicle speeds, typically in the range of 15 to 25 mph. The slower vehicle speeds at roundabouts improve the safety of the roundabout, both for vehicles and for pedestrians.

### **2. Choose the appropriate lane before entering the roundabout.**

On single lane roundabouts, there is usually only one entry lane from each direction. But for multi-lane roundabouts, you should make sure that you are in the proper lane when approaching the roundabout, just like at a traffic signal intersection. For instance, if you are going north and want to go west on the cross street, you should be in the left-most lane.

### **3. Vehicles in the circle have the right-of-way.**

When entering the roundabout you must yield to vehicles already in the circle. Once in the circle, you have the right-of-way and can circulate freely. On multi-lane roundabouts, be sure to stay in your own lane.

### **4. Always go around the central island in a counter-clockwise direction.**

Never shortcut left around the central island. This is dangerous and illegal. Always proceed to the right of the central island and circulate in a counter-clockwise direction. If you are going north and want to go west, you will travel counter-clockwise around the circle, then exit to the leg leading west.

## **5. Watch for pedestrians.**

Pedestrians may be crossing the road as you enter or exit the roundabout. Remember to accelerate slowly out of the roundabout.

## **Why Roundabouts?**

The primary reason for choosing roundabouts, compared to traffic signals is safety. Modern roundabouts, compared to traffic signal controlled intersections, have been proven to reduce injury accidents by 75% and fatal accidents by 90%. This is largely because of the lower speeds at roundabouts, compared to traffic signal intersections where vehicles often travel through a green light at full, free-flow speed. Accidents that do occur tend to be less severe, "fender-benders".

In addition, modern roundabouts are generally more cost effective to construct than conventional intersections with turn lanes and traffic signals. Other reasons for using a roundabout instead of a traffic signal are improved traffic flow and reduced maintenance costs. Roundabouts can also be constructed at intersections with unusual geometry, such as 5-legged intersections or where two roads intersect at sharp angles. Signalizing these types of intersections is often difficult.