

THE CONNECTOR

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SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Roundabouts save lives

By Pete Poore

When drivers approach a roundabout for the first time, navigating the circular intersection might be a little challenging, but getting the hang of it shouldn't take very long. It's in the best interest of drivers in the state to learn how to use roundabouts. One reason is that they are proving to be the safest places on the road.

The SCDOT Safety Office worked through the Federal Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) to complete the first roundabout project on September 29, 2011, at the intersection of Longs Pond Road (S-204) and Nazareth Road (S-243 in Lexington County). A total of nine roundabouts were constructed in under the HSIP in 2011-12. Federal requirements called for an evaluation of

all of these projects using "Before Crash Data" (prior to construction of the roundabouts) and "After Crash Data" for a period of time after construction was completed.

The evaluation reveals that crashes on the nine intersections were reduced significantly. In fact, both the number of crashes and "injury crashes" were reduced by 71% each. In addition, no fatal crashes have been reported in the "after" period for a 100% reduction in fatalities.

An evaluation of roundabouts on a national scale also reveals significantly improved safety. The current national data shows that crashes on roundabouts are 35% less than those on traditional intersections, 76% less for crashes with injuries and fatal crashes are 90% less.

Roundabouts are a proven success for the SCDOT Safety



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Office. Safety engineers will continue the use of roundabouts to meet the agency's safety goals. Approximately 20 more roundabouts are in the design phase for future construction.

Roundabouts have other benefits in addition to saving lives:

- This design creates less delay and better traffic flow than a traditional stop sign or signal controlled intersection.
- The operational costs are lower in the long term versus signs and signals that need both short-term and long-term maintenance.
- Roundabout intersections are more environmentally friendly than signalized intersections that require utilities to operate.
- Roundabouts generally have

lower right-of-way impacts than other geometric improvements.

• Roundabouts are designed to easily accommodate larger vehicles such as trucks, buses and emergency vehicles.

To demonstrate further proof of the effectiveness of roundabouts in preventing crashes, injuries and saving lives, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has advised all states that roundabouts are one of the top nine proven safety countermeasures for roadway safety.

FHWA encourages all states to make consideration of the use of roundabouts a high priority in helping to save lives and prevent serious injuries on our nation's roadways.

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VIEWPOINTS

By Christy Hall
Acting Secretary
of Transportation

I am honored to be able to serve as your Acting Secretary for SCDOT. I sincerely appreciate all that each and every one of our team members do every day in order to ensure that we are meeting our mission to the best of our abilities. I am always proud of our workforce and especially appreciate the recognitions of excellence we receive, whether if it is for emergency situations such as fire, ice or storms, or a simple thanks for assisting with a flat tire or winning regional awards for some of our key projects. Thank you for your commitment to SCDOT and South Carolina.

As we move forward day to day, we will continue to adhere to our Strategic Plan and Division Goals in order to ensure that we are all pushing on these very important goals together in order to make a difference for the state. Over the next few months, there are also 4 key areas that we will be focusing on in order to make some self-improvements.

1. Stabilizing the Workforce and Leadership Team. SCDOT has recently seen a number of key employees retiring or otherwise leaving the agency. These vary from senior managers to the front line maintenance employee. We must continue our efforts in recruiting and retaining employees in those positions to keep a consistent and productive team.

2. Improve Project Delivery. This effort is aimed at getting projects "on the street" faster and completing our construction projects on-time or ahead of schedule. The nature of most federal-aid projects and the process of developing and constructing projects is complex. In order to address this challenge, the agency must start developing projects earlier and put more projects in the development pipeline. We must also understand where delay is introduced into a project, whether it is in design, right of way, utility coordination, permitting or construction. This initiative will take several years to mature before it will yield consistent results, but we will go ahead and start working in the right direction with our internal staff and industry partners.

3. Simplify Messaging and Provide Visibility. "Complex" is perhaps understating the federal funding and engineering issues that SCDOT deals with on a daily basis. We realize that we must provide easy to understand descriptions of our activities, budget, revenues and other items of interest. We owe it to the citizens of South Carolina an easy to use resource that explains how the agency is funded and what it does with those resources. As such, we will be launching some new graphics for our budget, posting our project rankings, releasing a monthly expenditure report and using Facebook and Twitter to get the word out on the good things that our team does. I will need the help of everyone on the SCDOT team to help keep our Communications Office in the know, so please don't hesitate to send Pete Poore items and pictures of items that you want to celebrate so he can consider posting them to social media.

4. Procurement of Professional Services. SCDOT wants the procurement process for consultants to be transparent and free from any appearance of conflict. We are in the process of revising our selection process for consultants in order to assist with this effort. Additionally, we have

implemented a new policy that adds an additional layer of protection to the statutory provisions of the Ethics Act by precluding any former SCDOT employee from using their qualifications to gain an unfair advantage on a contract for a year after leaving SCDOT. This requirement does not preclude any employee from gaining employment in their profession once they leave agency. However, it does restrict their new company from using that former employee before the agency as they compete for a contract. The purpose of this new policy and our revisions to our selection process is to draw a clear line and address the perception of conflicts of interest or undue influence in these multi-million dollar contracts.

I expect the dialogue to continue in the next legislative session on funding and restructuring of SCDOT. We must continue our efforts to remain focused on our mission and doing our very best every day to get the job done. I have a vision of SCDOT as being recognized as a strong and effective DOT. The goal is for SCDOT to be viewed as efficient, reliable, focused on the mission, and ACT 114 compliant. We are committed to restoring relationships. I am calling on you to help the agency achieve that vision.