

## **DID YOU KNOW???**

### **ROUNDABOUNTS MAKE INTERSECTIONS MUCH SAFER**

A lot of action occurs at an intersection. Cars and trucks speed in from all directions, stopping, turning, changing lanes. For intersections with a higher-than-expected crash rate, highway engineers consider all alternatives -- all-way stop, signalization, and roundabout – and analyze service levels, queue levels, and crash reduction rates for each. In most cases, the decision comes down to a signal or a roundabout, and roundabouts typically are the best choice overall, and certainly the safest choice in most cases.

In a four-legged intersection controlled by either stop signs or a three-color signal, there are 32 potential conflict points; in a typical roundabout, there are only eight conflict points. Although we have only three roundabouts in NYS DOT Region 7, two more are planned, both in the Watertown area. They are on Northern Blvd. in the city of Watertown and at the intersection of Leray and Mill Streets just north of the city. I wish I could report that there were many more in the planning stage. It will come in due time.

The three existing roundabouts in Region 7 are the two on US 11 in Champlain at the intersection of the on/off ramps with I-87, and the one on US Avenue (US Route 9) in Plattsburgh.

The state of Maryland has been installing roundabouts for about 25 years. That state has cut the number of crashes by two-thirds by installing something other than a traditional intersection. In 1992, the Maryland DOT State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) formed a Roundabout Task Force to identify an intersection (MD 94 at MD 144 in Lisbon) with traffic volumes that didn't meet signalization requirements yet had a high crash rate. Despite a flashing beacon and stop signs, 33 crashes occurred from 1989 to 1992. Almost half – 15 – caused injuries. An estimated 5,500 vehicles traveled the route daily.

After installing a roundabout at this intersection, crashes decreased by 73% and traffic flows more smoothly. “As roads get busier and growth continues, roundabouts are increasingly becoming a go-to solution to solve complex highway issues,” says MDOT SHA Administrator Gregory Slater. “Roundabouts have been proven to improve safety by eliminating vehicle conflicts.”

Accidents at Maryland's first eight roundabouts have fallen 64% and crash-related injuries have fallen 83%. There have been no fatal crashes. MDOT SHA manages 88 of the nearly 200 roundabouts in the state.

Emmett McDevitt, Transportation Safety Engineer for the Federal Highway Administration, said last January that NYS has about 150 roundabouts statewide, with the first one installed in 1999 in Newburg. So far, there have been only two fatalities in these state roundabouts, both of which were the result of driving drunk and were not related to the engineering of the roundabout.

These are not statistics to ignore.

Roundabouts have been utilized in Europe for decades. And, in Carmel, Indiana, that city has pretty much done away with the traditional traffic signal in favor of roundabouts. Most drivers, with about six months experience with roundabouts, get to like them. Don't fear or avoid them – you will, in due time, get to love them.