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2200 Camp Branch Road
Waynesville, NC 28786
December 10, 2021

Subject: NCDOT Public Meeting to discuss US 276 Improvements, re: the Roundabout.

NCDOT scheduled and held a Public Meeting to discuss US 276 improvements on 12/7/2021. One of the “Improvements” was the introduction of a “roundabout” at the juncture of US 19 and US 276, replacing the traditional traffic light. I attended the meeting to find out what this roundabout was all about.



This meeting was held at the Pride Resort, 4394 Jonathan Creek Road, from 5-7 pm. As was the case with my attending the last NCDOT Public Meeting at Lake Junaluska on 9/2/2021, “Great Smoky Mountains Expressway”, I was presented with a colorful handout detailing the Project Description and other aspects of the proposed project. Unlike my previous encounter, I met with two people who were both courteous and informative, Jeanette White, Senior Project Engineer (NCDOT) and Andrew Topp, Senior Project Manager (vhb). My previous meeting was confrontational with Chris Lee, who was defensive, arrogant and evasive.

My intention was to find out what this roundabout was all about. Frankly, I did not even look at any other part of this improvement, so I have no comment on anything other than the roundabout.

Scenario.

I created a scenario in my mind that I was going to ask that should provide insight as to how this thing was going to work. The unusual part about this roundabout is that it is attempting to resolve traffic flow with the juncture of three 4 lane highways. How is that going to work? I know that the basic rule of a traffic circle (which is what this is called in Florida) is that whoever is on the inside has the right of way.

Okay, let's say I am coming out of Maggie Valley (this is a visualization), and I'm approaching this thing. I am in the right hand land. There is a lot of traffic. My intention it to eventually go left and get onto US 276. But there is a lot of traffic, and I am bunched up, and cannot get over to the left lane.

[**Editors Note:** Admittedly, I would have to be in the left lane as the traffic flow exists now, to make it into the left turn lane. But what the heck, I should be able to do that in the new traffic circle.]

There is heavy traffic preventing me from getting into the left lane of the traffic circle. So I enter the traffic circle in the outside lane, and there are cars in the inside lane. Most people coming out of Maggie Valley are going through this intersection and on into town, as with the guy next to me on my left, who now is in the inside lane. So, according to the rules of the traffic circle, whoever is on the inside lane has the right of way, and this person (him/her/they/them/it) wants to continue into town, but I want to keep going around the circle to take the US 276 exit. **Boom!**

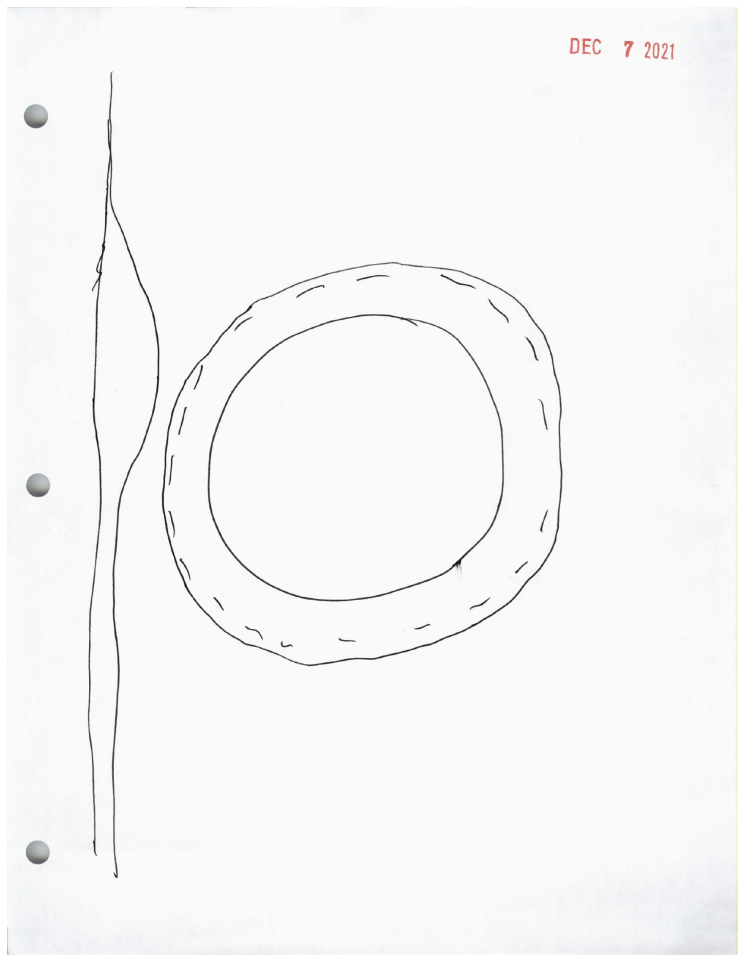
Whose fault is it?

Mine. I did not yield to the car on the inside lane who turned into me trying to get into town.

The crash blocks the traffic circle for hours.

Responses.

I was directed to Jeanette White (no business card), who gave me her full attention. As I started to explain my scenario, we resorted to a hand drawn diagram to facilitate the discussion.




She indicated that the roundabout would be clearly marked with dashed and solid lines. She then said that she would like to have someone join us in this discussion, Andrew Topp, whom she went over to get. She also provided a handout on “Your guide to Understand Roundabouts”.

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- **Why Install a Roundabout?**
Roundabouts help address safety and congestion concerns at intersections. They are designed to enhance traffic efficiency, safety and aesthetics, and minimize delay and cost for all users including motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists.
- **How do roundabouts affect safety?**
At traditional intersections with stop signs or traffic signals, the most serious types of crashes are t-bone, left-turn, and head-on collisions. With roundabouts, these types of crashes are reduced because vehicles travel in the same direction at a lower speed.

In North Carolina, crashes of all types have been reduced by almost half where roundabouts have been installed at existing intersection locations. For more information, please see the full technical report available at www.ncdot.org/doh/preconstruct/traffic/safety/Reports/completed.html.



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**NORTH CAROLINA
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**YOUR GUIDE
TO UNDERSTANDING
ROUNDBOUTS**



N.C. State University, Raleigh

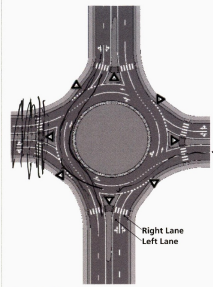
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



- **What is a roundabout?**
A roundabout is an intersection requiring entering traffic to yield the right of way to traffic already in the roundabout. This keeps the traffic in the roundabout flowing and prevents traffic backups and delays.
- **How is a roundabout different from a traffic circle?**
Modern roundabouts are generally much smaller than older traffic circles, and require vehicles to travel at a lower speed. Because of the higher speeds in traffic circles, generally they operate less efficiently and have higher crash rates than roundabouts.
- **What is the size of a roundabout?**
The size of a roundabout is determined by the amount of vehicles, the size of the largest vehicle using the roundabout, the need to achieve appropriate speeds throughout the roundabout, and the layout of the existing intersection. A roundabout is usually constructed to accommodate a tractor trailer. The size of a single-lane roundabout is typically 120 feet across. This is about one third the length of a football field.

- **Who makes the decision to install a roundabout?**
If the road under consideration is a state road, then NCDOT will make the decision after consulting with local governments. If the road is a local road, then the local government makes the decision.
- **Does a roundabout cost more to install than a traffic signal?**
The initial construction cost of a roundabout is more expensive than a traffic signal; however, maintenance and utility costs of a roundabout are less than a traffic signal over time.
- **Will a roundabout inconvenience me and add travel time to my drive?**
When operating within their capacity, roundabout intersections typically operate with shorter vehicle delays than other intersections, especially during non-peak traffic times.
- **Are roundabouts appropriate everywhere?**
No. The choice of using a roundabout is made on a case-by-case basis. NCDOT evaluates traffic volumes and crashes at each candidate intersection individually to determine if a roundabout would be the most effective solution.
- **How does a pedestrian navigate a roundabout?**
A pedestrian should walk around the outside, not through the middle of a roundabout. Roundabouts usually have marked sidewalks or striped crossings to help pedestrians navigate.
- **How does a bicyclist navigate a roundabout?**
A bicyclist should follow the same rules as a vehicle or walk along the outside of a roundabout like a pedestrian.

TWO LANE ROUNDBOUT



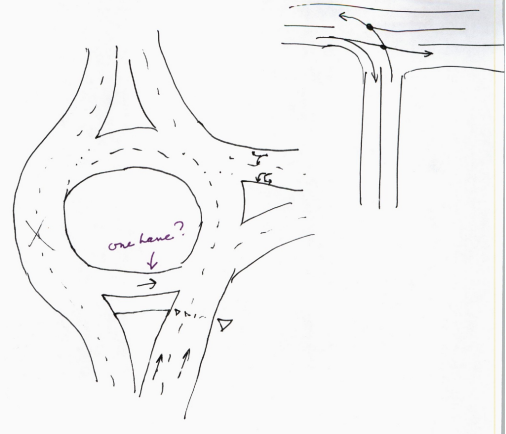
- **How to drive a roundabout:**
 - Yield to vehicles already in the roundabout;
 - Once in the roundabout, you have the right of way;
 - Use your turn signal when exiting the roundabout; and
 - Always be cautious and look for unexpected vehicles, pedestrians or bicycles.
- **How to drive a two-lane roundabout:**
Prior to entering the roundabout, move into the appropriate lane as you would when approaching a traffic signal. The left lane circles the roundabout and the right lane turns right. Advance signing will provide guidance. Do not cross from the left lane in the roundabout to the right lane as you exit the roundabout.

As Jeanette White was pulled away to assist other people at the meeting, most of my discussions from this point were with Andrew Topp.

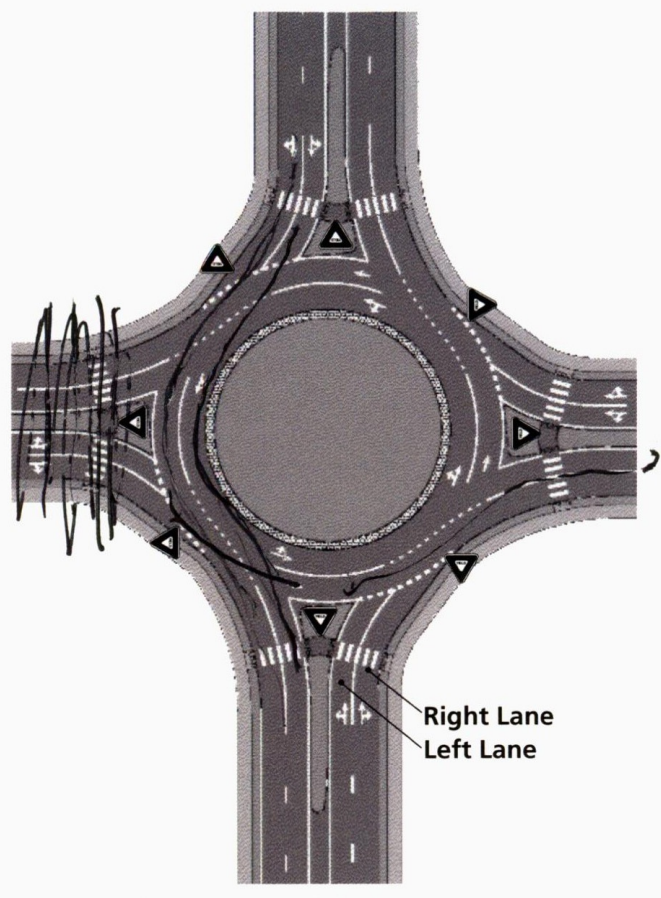
We used a combination of another hand drawn figure, plus the figure supplied in the Guide.

DEC 7 2021

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TWO LANE ROUNDABOUT



So, the following is a basic summary of questions and answers.

- Why a roundabout?

For safety. It slows people down, reducing the risk of higher speed collisions.

- How about my scenario?

(Refer to the second diagram on the last page. The drawing has been edited to eliminate one of the entrances to the roundabout, more accurately reflecting what is designed for this intersection. Two lines are drawn of vehicles coming from Maggie Valley, and there is a collision, where the guy in the inside lane continues into Waynesville, and I continue around the circle to attempt to get to 276.)

I am at fault! Why, because I was in the wrong lane going into the traffic circle.

- How are you going to re-educate all of the people in Maggie Valley on how to tell them how to use this roundabout?

We will do that with traffic signs. We are going to bring in people from Europe to help us out.

- WTF?
- What would you specifically do to fix the scenario I presented.

It was at this point that Andrew Topp modified the hand drawn diagram at the top of the previous page, reducing the two lanes of the traffic circle (where my accident occurred) down to one lane, someone continuing to make the path to get to 276. Although this seemed to make a little sense, it also showed me that this is a design in progress. There was no depiction of any drawing at that meeting that actually showed the traffic pattern inside this traffic circle, as was illustrated in the little guide pamphlet.

- Are there any traffic circles on North Carolina that connect 4 lane highways?

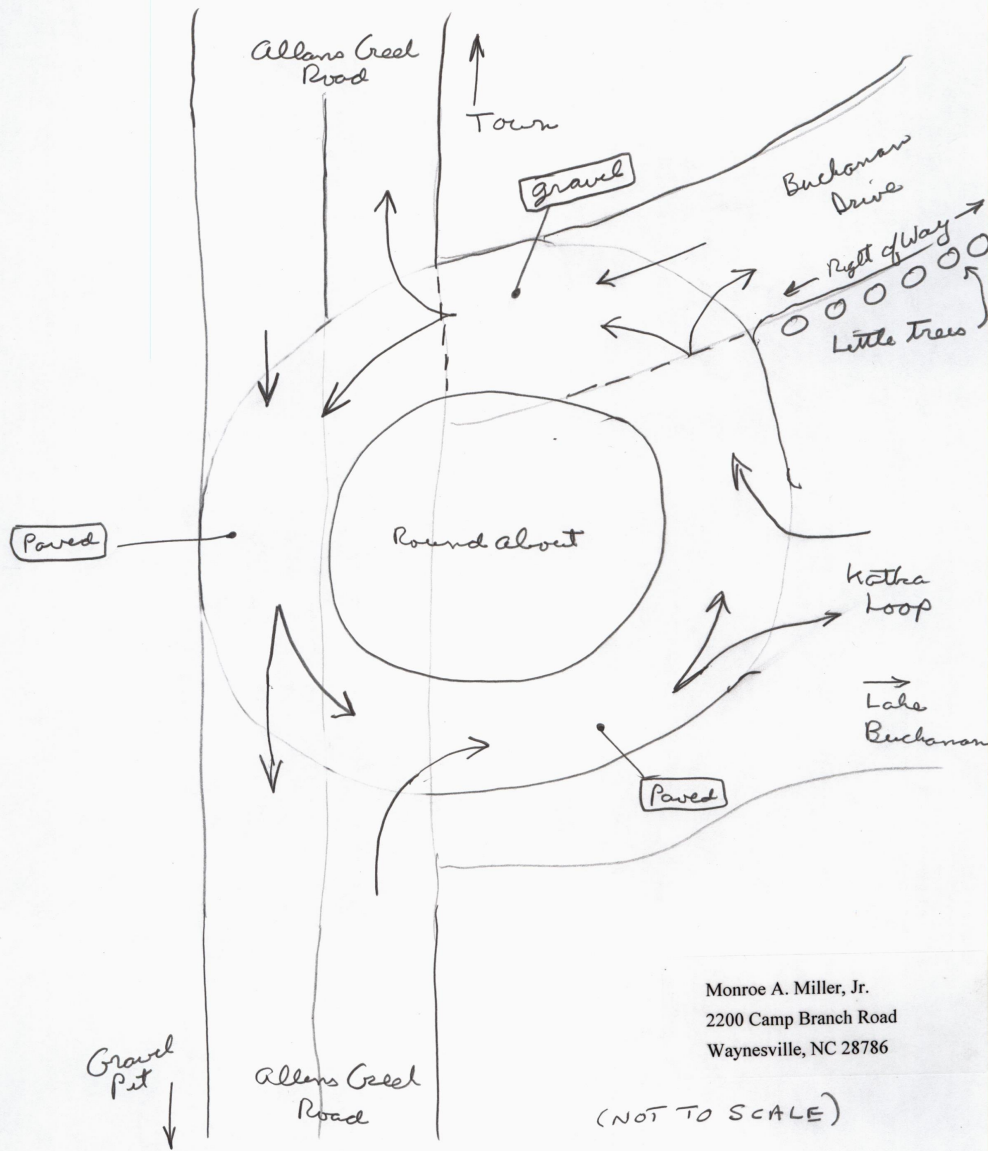
Yes, but they are all out East. Nothing west of Transylvania County.

- Not wanting to miss an opportunity to get an opinion from an expert, as a final question, I presented my brilliant attempt to solve the world's problems at the Browning Branch, LLC intersection, for which NCDOT has not given final approval for the Driveway Access. I showed him my diagram, and asked if he knew of a roundabout in North Carolina that connected to a gravel road.

Andrew looked up the intersection on his phone, and correctly identified it, asking is this what we are talking about? Yes, but the photo shows the Old Store, which has sense been demolished, and now there is more room for a round about. See the drawing on the next page. He thought there might be...

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LAKE BUCHANAN Roundabout



I asked for his card, but did not look at it until the next day, when I discovered that Andrew Topp did not work for NCDOT but vhb. What is vhb? Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.® and Vanasse Hangen BrustlinSM All Rights Reserved, a foreign company, according to the NC Secretary of State. [?]

I guess that is where the European assistance is going to come from. Wish them well in attempting to edumacate the folks here in sleepy little Haywood County on how to use a roundabout.

Monroe A. Miller, Jr.
Haywood County Taxpayer.

[LetsGoBrandon](#)