

## Recent Letters to the Editor

# Roundabout Likely To Increase Safety

By Doyle H. Kimbrough / Rio Grande Boulevard Neighborhood Association Treasurer on Sat, Sep 22, 2012

The proposed roundabout at the intersection of Rio Grande Boulevard and Candelaria Road NW is necessary. I have become very familiar with the facts related to the roundabout through serving as a current member and past president of the Board of the Rio Grande Boulevard Neighborhood Association and as chair of the Steering Committee working on the Update to the Rio Grande Boulevard Corridor Plan.

The rationale for increasing safety, economics and beauty are as follows:

Safety will be increased by substantially reducing speeding and the rate of accidents. A 2010 traffic survey found that 61 percent of vehicles exceeded the posted speed limit north of the intersection – between Elfego Road and San Lorenzo – and 70 percent exceeded the speed limit south of the intersection – between Artesanos Court and Oro Vista.

Two studies found the intersection has a very high accident rate. A 2011 Mid-Region Council of Governments Safety Report stated the intersection has a rate of pedestrian-involved accidents triple the average rate of the rest of the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area. The rate is the same as the intersection of San Mateo and Montgomery.

For 2004-2006, a 2008 engineering study by PB Americas reported the Crash Severity Index at the intersection is 1.6 times the city average. That study also identified 29 formally reported accidents during the period – more than two per month.

Installation of the roundabout will reduce vehicle speed through the intersection to 15-20 miles per hour. Studies by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety have shown replacing a traffic signal with roundabout reduces the probability of a severe injury by 75 percent.

The average travel time through the intersection will be the same, if not less. Traffic will not have to stop at a traffic light at Rio Grande and Candelaria. Queues will still occur during the morning and afternoon rush hours but will be the same whether the intersection has a traffic light or roundabout. During the remaining hours traffic will simply need to slow down versus stopping for up to 70

seconds on Candelaria or 30 seconds on Rio Grande.

The roundabout is designed to accommodate large vehicles and vehicles pulling long trailers. Most of these vehicles will be able to pass through the roundabout by following the established paved pathway.

Larger vehicles may need to place their tires on the raised interior circle that will have a rolled curb.

The Rio Grande/Candelaria intersection is the gateway to the Rio Grande Nature Center State Park, located at the western end of Candelaria Road.

As part of the funding, the roundabout will be landscaped to become an attractive entryway for the Nature Center and Rio Grande Bosque.

The cost of building the roundabout will be \$1.5 million. Of that amount, \$1 million will be new money into Albuquerque's economy from a federal safety grant.

The roundabout is a form of severe injury insurance. The volume of traffic going through the intersection – north and south only – over a 20-year period will be about 102.2 million trips. The cost per trip of a 75 percent reduction in the probability of a serious injury is \$1.5 million/102.2 million or 1.47 cents per exposure. That, in my opinion, is very inexpensive severe injury insurance, especially since it doesn't even include the east/west traffic.

If anyone has other concerns or would like more information in the form of Internet links, pictures, or other documentation, he or she may send an email to me at [RGBNATreasurer@aol.com](mailto:RGBNATreasurer@aol.com). □— This article appeared on page 22 of the Albuquerque Journal

## **Roundabouts Can Help Ease Traffic Flow**

By [Berry Ives / North Valley Resident](#) on Sat, Sep 15, 2012

For about a year, I have lived very close to the intersection of Candelaria and Rio Grande Boulevard, where a roundabout is planned for construction beginning early next year.

When I heard about this plan, I was thrilled. Before retiring from the Mid-Region Council of Governments, where I was a transportation planner, I organized a workshop on roundabouts, hoping to encourage their consideration when intersection improvements or new intersections are under study.

It is unfortunate that so many people react negatively to the idea of roundabouts – unfortunate but not unusual. Surveys have shown that public opinion prior to construction is roughly 3:1 against roundabouts, but after construction it flips to 3:1 with positive opinions. That demonstrates clearly that it is mostly fear of the unknown that motivates much of the opposition to roundabouts.

The main thing to understand about roundabouts is that when you are about to enter one, you must yield to traffic already in the roundabout. If you don't need to stop, you don't have to. So you will not be sitting there at a red light when there is no traffic, just keep right on going. It's great!

There are tens of thousands of roundabouts in Europe, and they are common in many places around the world. Currently, there are about 3,400 roundabouts in the U.S. compared to over 30,000 in France. They are building them because they usually work very well, especially with regard to safety.

Arizona's Department of Transportation has a good web page on roundabouts, and I encourage the skeptics out there to take a look at it:  
<http://www.azdot.gov/CCpartnerships/roundabouts/faq.asp>.

For intersections converted from stop control or signals to roundabouts, there is a 90 percent reduction in fatal and incapacitating crashes, and a 75 percent reduction in injury crashes. And this is done even while usually enhancing traffic flow.

There is also a reduction in fuel use, pollution and noise, since there are fewer stops and starts.

So sit back and relax, as most of you who are objecting will change your tune later. □ — This article appeared on page 15 of the Albuquerque Journal