

# CROSSROADS HOG SAFETY MINUTE MARCH 26, 2006

## TRAFFIC CIRCLES AND ROUNDABOUTS

Traffic circles and roundabouts are relatively new to us in the Midwest. For those of us in Crossroads, they are a fact of the road as we leave Brighton HD or travel Main Street in Brighton. Traffic circles and roundabouts have been proven to reduce intersection accidents by 37% and injury accidents in intersections by 51%. They also provide a more consistent flow of traffic reducing delays by as much as 50%. AND – they give the city and highway planners and opportunity to beautify the landscape.

A **traffic circle** is composed of a raised circular island in the center of an intersection with the roadway encircling that raised portion. They will be placed in intersections with 3 or 4 intersecting streets. The circle replaces stop signs for neighborhood streets – like the one on Main Street in Brighton.

A **roundabout** is a traffic circle designed to handle greater traffic volumes. They replace traffic signals. We see good examples south of the dealership around Lee Road.

### HOW DO YOU DRIVE IN A TRAFFIC CIRCLE?

They can be intimidating or confusing if you don't know the rules. They can be advantageous and fun once you know how to handle them. Here are the basics.

1. In the US you are going to be going counterclockwise around the circle.
2. Slow down as you approach the circle. You are typically not going to have to stop.
3. Watch for a gap in the traffic flow. Stop if you have to. Then merge with the traffic in the circle in the outside lane.
4. Yield to vehicles in the circle. **VEHICLES IN THE CIRCLE HAVE THE RIGHT-OF-WAY.**
5. In a **traffic circle** you simply go around until you reach the exit you want and exit to the right.
6. In a **roundabout** you are faced with a decision. If you are going to exit at the first opportunity, stay in the outside lane and exit to the right. If you are going to pass one or more exits, you should move to an inside lane then, when you are within one exit of your target, move to the outside lane. Your judgement is critical here. You judge the timing and the traffic. In reality, it takes a pretty big roundabout to give you the time to make lane changes. Be sure to give all the proper signals (hand and lights) as you maneuver in the circle. It is also critical that you match the speed of the traffic in the circle.

Here are a couple more tips for you to keep in mind.

1. Watch for pedestrians or bicycles. Crossing a circle is quite a challenge for them.
2. Buses and trucks can present an additional challenge. They move slower and their turning radius and trail may lead them to use more than a lane. Stay behind them.
3. IF YOU MISS YOUR EXIT – just go around again.
4. Unless there is a posted directive or an accident, do not stop in the circle.
5. When you are in a roundabout, pay close attention to anything in the inside lane as they may “dart” for their exit without warning.

### **How are we going to handle circles in a group ride?**

1. INDIVIDUAL riders are responsible for their safe negotiation of the circle. Each rider will enter and leave the circle as traffic permits.
2. Do not become a “lemming” and blindly follow the bike in front of you to stay tight with the group. Check for yourself to assure that you can safely enter the circle.
3. The lead rider will slow if necessary for all to catch up on the other side. The lead rider will be in communication with the sweep so that he/she knows the status of the group.
4. Know the route before you leave (standard group riding procedure) so you know where your going – where to get out of the circle. Circles are seldom so large or so crowded that you would lose the group in one.

There you go. That’s the basics of Traffic Circles and Roundabouts. Now, go practice.

*Mike, the Safety Guy*