

Roundabout at Virginia Union University on Lombardy Street in Richmond, VA



How do roundabouts affect older drivers?

Age-related declines in vision, hearing, and cognitive functions, as well as physical impairments, may affect some older adults' driving ability. Intersections can be especially challenging for older drivers. Relative to other age groups, senior drivers are over involved in crashes occurring at intersections. In 2004, about half of drivers 80 and older in fatal crashes were involved in multiple-vehicle intersection crashes, compared with 24 percent among drivers younger than 70. Older drivers' intersection crashes often are due to their failure to yield the right-of-way.¹¹ Particular problems for older drivers at traditional intersections include left turns and entering busy thoroughfares from cross streets. Roundabouts eliminate these situations entirely. A recent study in six communities where roundabouts replaced traditional intersections found that about two-thirds of drivers 65 and older supported the roundabouts.¹² Although safety effects of roundabouts specifically for older drivers are unknown, the 2001 Institute study of 23 intersections converted from traffic signals or stop signs to roundabouts reported the average age of crash-involved drivers did not increase following the installation of roundabouts, suggesting roundabouts may not pose a problem for older drivers.¹

References

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- 11 Mayhew, D.R.; Simpson, H.M.; and Ferguson, S.A. 2006. Collisions involving senior drivers: high-risk conditions and locations. *Traffic Injury Prevention* 7:117-24.
- 12 Retting, R.A.; Kyrychenko, S.Y.; and McCartt, A.T. 2007. Long-term trends in public opinion following construction of roundabouts. Proceedings of the Transportation Research Board 86th Annual Meeting, Washington, DC. Arlington, VA: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.