

**ROUNABOUT:**  
Construction starts  
in February 2017

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include citizen input in all phases of planning the roundabout project.

“Working with the focus groups and property-owners has been a really positive experience,” Darling told the Council.

Three different focus groups have been engaged in providing input to ODOT. The traffic-management part of the construction received intense scrutiny from a group of business and property owners from the area surrounding the roundabout. Other interested parties were also consulted, including the fire and sheriff’s departments, the school district, the U.S. Forest Service, Sisters Park & Recreation District, homeowners associations on the west end of Sisters, the Chamber of Commerce, Black Butte fire and police, Cascades East Transit, and anyone else who had something to gain and/or lose with the project.

One of the biggest challenges has been to devise a construction schedule that will allow for all through traffic on Highway 20 to be able to drive straight through during all phases of construction. By constructing the roundabout in

phases, closing first Barclay Drive in March and then McKinney Butte in April, it will be possible to maintain the Highway 20 traffic with no impacts during daytime hours. Both signed and unsigned detour routes will carry Barclay and McKinney Butte traffic around the construction zone.

The aesthetics focus group considered both hardscape and softscape components of the roundabout. The ADA ramps, rather than bright yellow, will be a muted reddish color, with the splitter islands and the concrete apron around the center a desert tan. All the poles for the lights and signs will be painted or powder-coated brown, rather than a shiny metal.

Landscaping will consist of drought-tolerant, low-maintenance, cold-hardy shrubs that reflect the transition from pine forest to high desert, and will blend in with the natural environment. A variety of grasses, Russian sage, dwarf mugo pines, and native flowers like blue flax and penstemon, as well as street trees, will be used to complete the project.

A third focus group of interested parties has been assembled by the City to consider the installation of artwork in the center of the roundabout, a 12- to 18-month process.

Using the template of the Bend Art in Public Places

group, they are currently working on a “call for artists” process that will take place over the next several months, as well as developing a public involvement process for the future artist/art selection. They will provide a recommendation to the Sisters Planning Commission for their consideration, who will in turn provide a recommendation to the Council for final approval.

Needing to have the project completed by Memorial Day puts the project on a tight schedule. To ensure the project would be finished, even if there are delays due to inclement winter weather, ODOT charted the winter weather in Sisters for the last 15-20 years. If needed, they can do some nighttime work, which would not include any noisy tasks such as jackhammering. If they lose a month to weather, they can double-shift to catch up.

Plans for equipment staging have also been carefully considered to reduce impact on the surrounding area. Through an agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, all equipment will be staged on the north side of Barclay Drive, where the future USFS headquarters are planned. By

using the site of the proposed parking lot, the cutting of trees will be minimized and any oil or fuel spills will eventually be covered by asphalt.

**Working with the focus groups and property owners has been a really positive experience.**  
— Mike Darling

“I think this is a really good traffic-management plan,” Public Works Director Paul Bertagna told the Council.

Bertagna shared with Council information he gleaned from a meeting he attended regarding the latest findings concerning the safety of roundabouts. When signals are used for traffic control on roads where cars are coming from a high-speed rural road into an urban setting, much like Highway 20 into Sisters, the chances for high-speed, high-impact accidents are very high.

Roundabouts, as an area of transition, provide for much greater intersection safety. The change of pavement from

asphalt to concrete signals to the driver that something different is coming. The road geometry of a roundabout makes a driver pay more attention than does a straight stretch of highway. The inclusion of streetlights and curbs also draws attention to the upcoming intersection. On Highway 20, signs indicating slower speeds will be placed further west of town than where they currently are.

The Sisters roundabout will be the third largest roundabout in Oregon, designed to accommodate freight trucks. There is one located in Astoria and another on Oregon Highway 47 at Verboort, northeast of Forest Grove. Bertagna reported having visited the Verboort roundabout to observe the traffic flow. He said it functioned well.

To date, there have been no fatalities reported on any Oregon roundabouts. Statistics support the contention that roundabouts provide operational functionality and increased intersection safety.

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