

The letter published in the Southampton Press regarding the proposed roundabout design for Main Street at Mill Road and Library Avenue raises questions regarding the safety of the design and whether it would tend to isolate businesses surround it. The assumption that the design is unsafe for pedestrians is wrong. In fact, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety says that roundabouts are generally safer for pedestrians. They are also safer alternatives to traffic signals and stop signs. Pedestrians are safer at roundabouts because crossings are simplified, and a pedestrian only crosses a 16-foot wide one-way roadway at each crossing, as opposed to crossing a typical intersection leg with a 30 to 60 feet width, with multiple turning movements occurring in addition to straight through movements. The number of potential conflict points a pedestrian may encounter goes from 6 to 1.

Concern has been expressed regarding the ability of the visually impaired to negotiate roundabouts and also the more common channelized turn lane associated with signalized intersections. Visually impaired individuals depend on the sound of oncoming vehicles to identify potential conflicts, and roundabouts, particularly two-lane roundabouts, or channelized lanes can make it more difficult to identify approaching vehicles. Also, important to the visually impaired pedestrian is the number of vehicles using the roundabout when the pedestrian wishes to cross and number and length of gaps in traffic available to the pedestrian crossing. Additional factors are the speed of vehicles negotiating the roundabout (slower vehicles tend to make less noise) and whether motorists obey the law and yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk. The design of the proposed roundabout at Library Avenue will take into account all of these factors to maximize safety for both visually impaired and regular pedestrians. The roundabout design will be:

- A single lane roundabout;
- Circulating volume will be relatively low which will:
 - Provide plenty of gaps of a sufficient length to allow easy pedestrian crossings

- Easier identification of vehicles traversing the roundabout by visually impaired pedestrians
- An open design that allows motorists to readily see and identify pedestrians waiting to cross and crossing in the designated crosswalks;
- Enhanced pavement markings and signing to alert drivers to pedestrians crossing;
- Care will be taken to align handicap ramps and detectable warnings for the visually impaired to facilitate crossing. Landscaping will be used to guide the visually impaired to the proper crossings.

Through the design of the roundabout and a sensitivity to handicap issues, the proposed improvement will substantially increase safety and make pedestrian access easier. There will be two pedestrian crossings of Main Street at the intersection, one on the east, one on the west. The alignment of the pedestrian crossing of Library Avenue will be at a similar alignment as it is today but will be shorter. Only the crossing of Mill Road, on the north side of Main Street, will be somewhat more circuitous, but this crossing will not be sufficient to isolate the Post Office.

The letter also notes that the use of audible pedestrian signals and push buttons associated with traffic signals enable visually impaired pedestrians to cross intersections more safely. The intersection of Main Street at Mill Road and Library Avenue is currently unsignalized and the level of accidents occurring at the intersection and the volumes of traffic traversing the intersection do not and would not in the near future warrant the installation of a traffic signal. The installation of a signal has never been contemplated for the intersection.

We note that concerns were raised prior to the construction of the five-corner roundabout near Village Hall, regarding pedestrian safety and particularly that of school children. After completion of the project, those concerns disappeared.