



# Herald-Tribune

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## Attendees at FDOT informational event skeptical that proposed traffic mechanism is a good idea.

SARASOTA — The notion of a roundabout replacing the signalized intersection at U.S. 41 and Gulfstream Avenue prompted many questions and concerns among residents who attended a Florida Department of Transportation presentation about the proposal on Tuesday evening.

“I look out my window and see the Ringling Bridge traffic backed up to Bird Key,” said downtown Sarasota resident Dan Rose. “I can only imagine what this is going to do.”

The FDOT is engaged in a \$436,000 preliminary design and engineering study to determine whether a roundabout is the right fix for the crossroads where traffic frequently becomes backlogged in all directions. It expects to complete that review by this summer.

FDOT spokesman Zach Burch said the roundabout would be south of the current intersection and north of the

Unconditional Surrender statue. The agency does not expect it to have a major impact on the city's bayfront park or to require the purchase of right of way.

The state is constructing roundabouts on U.S. 41 at 10th Street and 14th Street, a \$12.6 million project to be completed in early 2020. It recommends a roundabout at U.S. 41 and Fruitville Road and is considering roundabouts for the road's intersections at Dr. Martin Luther King Way and Myrtle Street.

Barbara Ravis of Sarasota wonders whether the area is becoming overwhelmed with simultaneous road and building construction. "Why not stall some building permits while they are building some of these traffic circles?" she asked.

Rose believes an overpass from the Ringling Causeway for traffic wanting to head north on U.S. 41 would do more to alleviate traffic by steering it away from the signalized intersection and drivers headed into downtown Sarasota.

"There is too much going on" in that intersection, Rose said. "Tourists are not accustomed to rotaries. Most drivers don't know the rules that apply to rotaries."

Rose said he resides near the roundabout at Palm Avenue and Ringling Boulevard. Although it is smaller than what is envisioned for U.S. 41 and Gulfstream, Rose said drivers find it "confusing."

Susan Brown, who resides in the Sunset Drive area, worries that the roundabout may become "a snarled mess." She likes the FDOT's plan to add lighted pedestrian signals. "They need to put those in now." Yet she foresees difficulties for traffic

trying to cross two lanes in the roundabout to get into the exit lane they want.

Stuart Rubens, who resides on Gulfstream, said he hails from Washington, D.C. “We have traffic circles all over the place. It doesn’t work in heavy traffic.” He noted that a simulation video about the roundabout showed drivers keeping one or two car lengths from each other. “I’ve never seen that in real life. Everybody’s on each other’s tail and anxious to get home.”

“I observe how people drive around here,” said Gary Dornbush, who resides on nearby Sunset Drive. “They don’t know the rules for when you are in a roundabout. Because of the high levels of traffic and the higher speeds, people are not going to yield. My prediction is this intersection is going to have a lot of accidents. And, once you have an accident there, there’s no place to pull over.”

Toosie Winokur, who resides in a condo near the bay, said she dislikes the idea of more and more roundabouts. “It’s unreal. They’ve ruined a charming, charming Sarasota.”

Sandra Tessler, a Gulfstream resident, said she felt the meeting was falsely promoted as a public forum. “It was a PR event for engineers who favor building roundabouts. They have not considered alternatives.”

Dan Lobeck, Sarasota Attorney, said: The only other large roundabout in the area is at Jacaranda Boulevard and Venice Boulevard. It is despised by Venice residents for its difficulty and danger, and has many accidents. A recent report by traffic engineers for a proposed hospital nearby concluded that to handle the additional traffic the roundabout must be

abandoned and returned to a signalized intersection. **Sarasota officials think they can hide their heads about the gridlock their pro-development and anti-mobility policies are creating by pretending that roundabouts everywhere will solve the problem. They will not. Particularly not a huge multi-laned one at one of the heaviest traffic areas in the County.**

