

Highway 3 roundabout OK'd

Project will be near planned park and ride in Belfair

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Drivers on Highway 3 in Belfair can expect to see a roundabout in their future.

The Department of Transportation

Project

Continued from Page 1A

ing the new park and ride, said Mason Transit General Manager Danette Brannin.

"Studies have shown that roundabouts are safer than traditional stop signs or signals," she said. "There is a perception that roundabouts slow traffic... However, it is proven roundabouts actually move traffic through an intersection more quickly by providing a continuous flow of traffic."

Studies from the Federal Highway Administration and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety show that roundabouts typically reduce overall collisions by 37 percent, including a 75 percent reduction in injury collisions and a 90 percent reduction in fatality collisions.

"For MTA, the goal is to provide a safe method for

last week approved Mason Transit Authority's plan to build a roundabout on Highway 3 at the intersection of the highway and the transit authority's planned park and ride in Belfair, near the border of the Kitsap County line.

The transit authority hired consulting firm SCJ Alliance to analyze suitable

our buses to move on and off of State Route 3," Brannin said. "We believe from all the research on roundabouts it is the best solution for safety, but we understand not everyone is a fan and roundabouts take some adjusting."

The top concerns heard from the public at March and April public meetings in Belfair were that the roundabout would slow traffic on an already congested highway and that a roundabout would not be a safe option for the large freight trucks that move through the corridor.

SCJ Alliance will design the roundabout and plans to design it in such a way that it can accommodate the volume and size of freight trucks that typically use the highway.

Meanwhile, the firm Architects Rasmussen Triebelhorn will design the park-and-ride building.

The site plan for the building will soon be submitted to Mason County for approval and will likely

types of intersections at the site, as required by the Department of Transportation.

SCJ Alliance held public meetings in Belfair, and despite hearing heated testimony against the roundabout, concluded that the roundabout would be the safest option for drivers entering and exiting

See PROJECT, Page 2A

go out to bid for construction later this year or in early 2019, with groundbreaking scheduled for around March 2019, Brannin said.

Construction on the roundabout will run concurrently with construction of the park and ride.

The North Mason park and ride will help commuters and travelers to Bremerton who now park their cars at The Bridge Church, OFC and the transit authority's parking lot on Roy Road, she said.

Until the Belfair bypass is built, congestion through town won't go away, roundabout or not, Brannin continued.

"Putting more people on buses will help with congestion and, as a bonus, reduce emissions released into the environment," she said. "MTA sees the potential growth in the Belfair area and we believe a park and ride will entice riders to ... use transit, which is a big benefit to all."



Scott Sawyer discusses the possibility of a Highway 3 roundabout in March. ARLA SHEPHARD BULL/SPECIAL TO KITSAP SUN

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