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- [Home Page](#)
- [News Page](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Births](#)
- [Commentary](#)
- [Cliff Buchan](#)
- [Glen Strandberg](#)
- [Teen Talk](#)
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Roundabouts around the world

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Staff Writer

Although there is no other project quite like the proposed Forest Lake roundabout project, it is not the only city in the United States dealing with the possibility.

In fact, there are larger, more complicated projects going in all around the U.S. and the world.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety states that the first roundabouts in the U.S. were constructed in Nevada in 1990, and since then roughly 1000 have been built, and counting.

Almost half of the states in the U.S. have roundabouts on their roads and highways including New York, Wisconsin, Kansas, Vermont, Mississippi and several others.

Area Roundabouts

The closest roundabout to Forest Lake, that is most like its layout, sits at an on and off ramp in Hudson, WI.

It is a two-lane roundabout, much like what will be placed at the West Broadway and I-35 exits.

The intersection is located at Highway 35 and Hanley Rd. The drive to Hudson, from Forest Lake, took approximately 45 minutes.

There are other roundabouts in Minnesota, but the ones in Hudson were more like what Forest Lake is proposing.

There are single lane roundabouts in Woodbury, Medford, Maplewood and Buffalo, among other cities.

Another relatively close roundabout section is in Mt. Horeb, WI. In this situation one roundabout was constructed and soon after plans for four more were complete.

All five roundabouts will be finished in early November of 2006.

Roundabouts in the U.S., World

In Detroit, MI the city is working to construct eight roundabouts in a grid-locked area of town. Three of the roundabouts will be open in 2007, with a total of 14 planned for the future.

The \$140 million dollar project called the Northwestern Connector Project and can be seen at www.nwconnector.com.

IIHS completed a study that evaluated the expected effects of roundabouts on traffic flow compared with two-lane, signal lights in northern Virginia.

The study found that on average, there was a 62 to 74 percent reduction in vehicle delays and if roundabouts were in place they could have prevented an estimated 62 crashes, including 41 injury crashes, between 1999 and 2003, at five intersections. (The IIHS study was based on estimates provided by the N.Y. Department of Transportation study in 2004 that found that 37 percent fewer crashes and 75 percent fewer injury crashes from conversion to roundabouts).

In the September 14 edition of the Forest Lake Times a roundabout project being constructed in Malta, NY was featured.

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Malta, a suburb of Albany, is placing a total of five roundabouts directly off of their interstate, equivalent to Minnesota's I-35. Each roundabout is two lanes and is estimated to hold as many cars as Forest Lake would.

Across the ocean in Swindon, England a special roundabout, or a iMagic Roundabout, was constructed over 34 years ago.

Due to five rounds converging all at one point, city officials in Swindon decided something had to be done.

Their solution, along with help from the Road Research Laboratory, was one large roundabout comprised of five mini-roundabouts.

Vehicles travel through the large roundabout by entering as many smaller roundabouts as needed to get to their destination.

The creators of www.swindonweb.com report that although there have been 14 serious accidents and 80 lesser ones recorded in 32 years, that rate is less than one would expect for such a busy junction.

They went on to say that most of the accidents involved bicycle riders and motorcycles. The city then added a bicycle lane that circles the outside of the roundabout.

Since there is a large amount of roundabouts in Europe, a new society has formed to feature the roundabouts. Its name?

The UK Roundabout Appreciation Society.

For more information about roundabouts visit the city of Forest Lake's web site at www.ci.forest-lake.mn.us. On the web site area residents can see a video of how to navigate a roundabout, among other items.

The Washington County web site, at www.co.washington.mn.us, also has several articles and videos to view.

[Top of Page](#)

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