

OAKLAND COUNTY

Roundabout to test walker crossing signal

BY KORIE WILKINS • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • March 8, 2008

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An agreement to add a pedestrian crossing system to a traffic roundabout in Oakland County has temporarily halted a federal lawsuit claiming roundabouts are dangerous for disabled pedestrians.

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Attorney Richard Bernstein filed the lawsuit in August on behalf of three men with disabilities shortly before the Road Commission for Oakland County opened the first of eight planned roundabouts in West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills as part of the Northwestern Connector project.

The suit alleged the roundabouts did not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Two roundabouts are open in the project, which is designed to ease traffic congestion between Northwestern Highway and M-5.

"I am so excited about it," said Bernstein, who said the lawsuit could be dropped if the signals improve safety during a yearlong test, possibly opening the way for other roundabouts to get them. "What is good for the disabled person will be good for everybody."

Road commission spokesman Craig Bryson said the signals could be installed as early as summer at Maple and Drake in West Bloomfield. He said he's not sure how much the signals will cost or where the money will come from.

The signals operate only when someone pushes a button to cross the road, Bryson said, stopping traffic with yellow and red lights. The signals also will chirp to accommodate blind pedestrians.

"I like the idea a lot," said Garret Gerson, 18, of Oak Park, one of the men who filed the lawsuit. "I want to see how it works."

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