Natural Bridge Safety Project
April 2021 update

Crews have been hard at work around the remaining portions of the Natural Bridge project. At this time, crews anticipate finishing the work on the roundabout at Natural Bridge and Goodfellow later this week. When that is finished, crews will be primarily working on the islands, and on ensuring the sidewalks around the roundabout meet Americans with Disability Act requirements, and on temporarily striping the roundabout.

Much of this work remains out in the middle of the roadway – so continue to drive slowly through the work zone at Natural Bridge and Goodfellow, and watch out for the workers on the roadway by avoiding distractions, such as looking at your phone.

Last month, minority crews members on the project made up about 22 percent of the workers.   Overall, the minority crews members working on the project have been just over 21 percent of the work force.

As a reminder, the purpose of this project is to improve safety along the Natural Bridge corridor between Salisbury/Parnell and Darby. This work began after local elected leaders and citizens approached the department about how to make the roadway safe. After investigation, including discussions with residents and business owners, the department determined that speeding, aggressive driving and improper lane use were three of the main factors in many of the crashes along the corridor.

Reducing the number of lanes in this section helps reduce the chances of speeding and improper lane usage. Roundabouts help reduce the potential for speeding and for aggressive driving – especially those issues that can cause damaging crashes.

Roundabouts and safety

The Federal Highway Administration says that intersections where a roundabout was installed typically see a 76 percent reduction in crashes that cause injuries, and up to 90 percent reduction in fatalities. Here are three of the main reasons:

Fewer Conflicts

When traffic approaches a typical four-leg intersection (whether it has a signal or a stop sign), there are 32 places where one vehicle can possibly strike another – called conflict points. These are where the vehicle is crossing the interchange, turning into the interchange or turning out of the interchange. In contrast, the places where one vehicle can potentially crash into another in a four-leg roundabout intersection is reduced to eight – where vehicles enter the roundabout and where they leave the roundabout. This drastic reduction is because all the traffic moving around four-leg roundabout uses the same route through the intersection. Drivers only need to look in one place for conflicting traffic.

Less severe crashes

Another benefit of the four-leg roundabout is that the drivers in the intersection are all driving the same direction. This changes the types of crashes that commonly occur if drivers do make a mistake. In a roundabout, a crash between cars is much more likely to be a side-swipe or rear-end crash than the more serious head-on or right-angle (T-bone) crash. The damage and injuries from crashes of these types is far less even when the cars are traveling the same speed. The angle of impact plays a big role in the damage caused by a crash. If two cars are travelling at 20 mph towards each other and have a head-on accident, the cars will impact each other at 40 mph. However, of those same two cars have a sideswipe incident, the impact will only occur at a few miles per hour, with much less serious consequences.

Slower speeds

The islands that direct traffic through the roundabouts help to slow traffic down entering and moving through the roundabout, further helping to reduce crash severity. It also makes it safer for cyclists traveling along the roadway, and for pedestrians crossing the street at the roundabout.

If you have any questions, or need to discuss concerns about the project, please call our customer service team at 314-275-1500 and ask to speak to one of the Natural Bridge project team members.