



By [Lisa Allmendinger](#)  
Regional Reporter

## New roundabout on South State: 'You either love them or hate them'

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A look at the proposed roundabout at State Road and Ellsworth Road in Pittsfield Township.

An informational meeting about a proposed roundabout at State and Ellsworth roads near the Costco site drew about 250 people to **Pittsfield Township** Hall Wednesday night.

Many in the audience expressed concerns about the roundabout, questioning whether this was the best way to handle additional traffic, bikes and people expected to traverse the intersection. They asked if officials had considered that this route becomes a cut-through when Interstate 94 is backed up or other adjacent roads are clogged with traffic.

Residents repeatedly reminded officials that on home football Saturdays in Ann Arbor, there are 100,000 more people in town, many of whom don't know how to drive through a roundabout.

“All circles are not created equal,” said **Mark McCulloch**, an engineer for the **Washtenaw County Road Commission**, who is in charge of the project.

He stressed that the roundabout proposed for State and Ellsworth would not be like the one on Lee Road near Brighton, which some residents said was very confusing.

Because this roundabout will be located near the Pittsfield Township Senior Center, several people in the audience said they hoped the Road Commission would provide seniors with training and a video so they could learn how to drive around it. Several asked if Road Commission officials would drive them through the roundabout so they'd be more comfortable navigating it.

More information about the history and safety features of roundabouts can be found [here](#).

Additional information about how to navigate roundabouts can be found [here](#).

McCulloch, who has worked on roundabouts for the Road Commission for the last five years, said that once people get used to roundabouts, they often end up liking them.

“I've been told roundabouts are like the Yankees. You either love them or hate them,” he said.

The proposed roundabout in Pittsfield Township will not be a “figure-eight” design, which is what makes the Lee Road one so difficult for many people to navigate.

He said roundabouts can cost between \$700,000 to \$2 million depending on the size and cost of acquiring a right of way for the project. If the land needed for a right of way is in a commercial or industrial area, the costs tend to be higher than in a residential area, he said.



The Road Commission was awarded federal aid in the amount of \$1.4 million dollars for construction through a Congestion Mitigation Air Quality grant known as CMAQ.

Mark McCulloch, the project engineer for the new proposed roundabout in Pittsfield Township.

In addition, Costco contributed \$500,000 that will be used to pay for the design, construction engineering and testing and any needed right-of-way easements to construct the roundabout at the intersection, he said.

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Several residents said they thought the proposed roundabout was too small for the amount of hourly traffic that already goes through that intersection, which is estimated to be between 3,000 and 3,500 vehicles.

“Although the concept by definition is a good concept,” one resident said, he called the proposed one “a toy roundabout,” when compared to European counterparts.

He pointed to the Maple Road roundabout where “half the signs are busted” as an example of another one that’s not large enough.

Another resident asked if there was anything he or she could do “to stop this madness.”

Road Commission officials said that this was the most feasible and safe alternative for moving vehicles, bikes and pedestrians through the area.

“I want this to be successful and for people to like it,” McCulloch said.

**Wes Butch**, planning division manager for **DLZ Michigan, Inc.** of Lansing, design consultant for the project, told residents that computer models were designed using a projected traffic flow that took into account a 20-percent growth rate in the area.

He expects about 5,000 cars to flow through the roundabout per hour.

When constructed in 2013, this will be the [10th roundabout](#) in the county. It’s expected that construction would begin next April or May and be completed in time for Labor Day and the first home U-M football game.

Wednesday night’s meeting was the first forum on the project, and another meeting with more details is planned before construction commences.

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Another look at the proposed new roundabout in Pittsfield Township.

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