



CONSTRUCTION

The era of the roundabout has arrived in Prince Edward Island

By Andy Walker

Contributing Writer

While traffic circles are a staple in most other provinces, the Island's predominately rural nature and relatively low traffic volumes has meant a delayed introduction.

The acting chief engineer for the Department of Transportation and Public Works says roundabouts have been considered a number of times in the past. However, Stephen Yeo says it wasn't until the department started looking at how to improve the traffic flow at the intersection of Routes 1A and 2 just outside Summerside at Traveller's Rest that the roundabout was deemed the best solution.

Yeo explains the intersection – where travellers have a choice of heading east towards Kensington and Charlottetown, exiting into the City of Summerside proper, accessing the Trans-Canada Highway and Confederation Bridge or heading to the western part of the province – has been the scene of several accidents.

"Safety was our major issue," Yeo says.

After the department decided to choose the roundabout, Yeo says they quickly realized an educational campaign was in order. Working with Delphi Engineering in Halifax, which designed the roundabout, a public meeting on the issue was held and a scale model of the roundabout was even set up so that people could drive through.

Yeo says when the roundabout first opened in early September, he heard

some complaints from truckers about the structure being too small. However, he says those concerns now seem to have largely disappeared.

As of the end of September, he says the site has been accident free and traffic was following smoothly. He adds, "We're not saying the roundabout will be the answer in every situation, but we would certainly consider it again."

Meanwhile, the Town of Cornwall is proposing two roundabouts in its transportation master plan. The town of approximately 5,000 people hired CBCL Consultants to develop a plan to get motorists across and through the community without the Trans-Canada Highway acting as an obstacle. Right now, the province's major highway runs right through the heart of the town.

The plan calls for roundabouts at the eastern and western entrances to the community. Mayor Jack Kelly says the plan is a long-term concept only at this point and there's no construction timetable in place.

The provincial government has talked for some time about building a by-pass road around the community and Mayor Kelly says the new transportation plan is aimed at converting the section of the Trans-Canada Highway into Main Street. The plan involves planting trees and installing pedestrian friendly sidewalks.

"When the plan looks at intersections, we want to limit them to control traffic flow," says Janice Harper, the town's planning and development officer. "We also want the intersections to be prominent so that it's clear to everyone pedestrians have priority."

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