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ROCKY MOUNTAIN OUTLOOK

Society wants more roundabouts

By Tanya Foubert - Rocky Mountain Outlook

Published: March 24, 2010 8:00 PM
Updated: March 24, 2010 8:59 PM

A local group concerned with air quality and pollution wants Canmore council to consider roundabouts, or traffic circles, at all intersections where traffic lights are located.

Ken Blackwood with the Bow Valley Clean Air Society made a presentation to council on March 16 to promote the use of modern roundabouts to reduce idling in the community.

"We hope we show the removal of traffic signals or traffic lights and changing them to traffic circles will materially reduce amounts of pollution," Blackwood said. "It will also reduce frustration of drivers and increase safety."

He said the society estimates switching to roundabouts could save the municipality \$13,000 a year in its operational budget.

Roundabouts also increase the safety for drivers and pedestrians by 60 to 70 per cent, he said.

Blackwood said countries like New Zealand have switched their preferred mode of traffic regulation at intersections to roundabouts with success.

He said the recommendation of the Clean Air Society is to use one-lane roundabouts versus multi-lane ones as they (multi-lane) increase the risk of accidents.

With vehicles waiting an average of one minute at a traffic light, Blackwood said switching to roundabouts in Canmore would eliminate a substantial amount of CO2 and other pollutants.

"Reducing pollution starts small and gets bigger," Blackwood said. "Removing traffic lights is an obvious savings in pollutants and finances and it improves safety."

Councillor André Gareau asked engineering for input into the discussion.

Manager of engineering Kevin Van Vliet said the 2007 transportation master plan update discusses roundabouts at several locations, including 17th Street and Bow Valley Trail, Main Street and Railway Avenue and Bow Valley Trail and Benchlands Trail/Railway Avenue.

He said the locations nearest to the railway crossings present challenges because when a train is crossing it would effectively shut down the roundabout.

With a traffic signal, he said, at least traffic is flowing through parts of the intersection.

Van Vliet said there is also the issue of land area needed to develop a roundabout. The transportation plan points to space needed for the Railway and Main location.

"The land requirement for a roundabout here would be considerable, and would impact existing development," it states.

A traffic signal is planned over the next five years for Main Street and Seventh Avenue.

"I do not believe we have the space here," said Van Vliet. "But it is something we will look at as we get closer to changing that intersection."



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