

# Burlington Walk | Bike Council



*a Volunteer Advisory Group to the  
City of Burlington's Dept of Public Works*

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September 5, 2014

To: Chapin Spencer, Director, Burlington Public Works  
Nicole Losch, Bicycle & Pedestrian Program Manager

Dear Chapin and Nicole:

This letter respectfully requests the Burlington Department of Public Works (DPW) undertake a mini-roundabout demonstration during calendar year 2015, and the Burlington Walk Bike Council (BWBC) hereby recommends up to \$12,000 of the walk/bike set-aside be used to offset the crossing, ramping and other related walk and bicycle construction costs.

**Why:** A roundabout demonstration will be an effective way to make an improvement to the city's infrastructure *while simultaneously serving an important educational and promotional function for the Go for Gold effort*. Uncertainty and concerns continue among both officials and the public at large in Burlington about how well roundabouts actually work on busy streets. Inexpensive and quick to install, this project will make it possible for Burlington to experience the effectiveness of a modern roundabout first-hand, subsequently allowing the City to use them regularly for achieving livable streets and neighborhoods.

Though Burlington's first busy street roundabout planned for the Shelburne Street "rotary" will open in late 2017 (at the earliest), a mini-roundabout demonstration, possible as early as next summer, will help build public acceptance in the near-term giving residents first hand experience with this intersection standard.

We believe roundabouts are essential components of walkable and bikable city infrastructure, improving safety for all travel modes compared to alternatives and promoting smooth vehicle flow. The Federal Highway Administration has links to many documents and videos on

roundabouts, including design and benefits for safety and traffic flow on their website <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/roundabouts/>. The research paper [http://nacto.org/docs/usdg/dimondale\\_miniround\\_about\\_waddell.pdf](http://nacto.org/docs/usdg/dimondale_miniround_about_waddell.pdf) reports an example of the reductions in delay from roundabouts. Roundabouts have quickly become popular in Vermont after installation.

**Benefits:**

- Reduced intersection delays for all users
- Improved safety for all users
- Reduction in neighborhood speeds, which will extend a block or two in all directions
- Fits into the Go For Gold effort and adds strength to the City's pursuit of Gold level walk and bike-friendly designation

**Where:** Mini-roundabouts are well-suited for all-way stop intersections with moderate traffic, of which there are many examples in Burlington. Possible candidates for a demonstration include King/So. Champlain Streets, Maple/So. Champlain Streets, North Winooski Ave./North Union Ave./Decatur St., and Archibald St./North Willard Ave. The North Avenue corridor study Advisory Committee voted to approve roundabouts at three busy intersections on the corridor. There are certainly many other candidates throughout the City.

**Installation:** Mini-roundabouts are remarkably simple and in most cases involve minimal changes in existing street and curb alignments. The major work involves relocating crosswalks and installing associated ramping, a low mountable pavement dome comprising the "center island", yield signs, and pavement markings. In addition a narrow lane divider can be installed with bollards at the distal end of the divider in order to help mark the vehicle approach lanes and ease movements on the cross walks. At the end of the demonstration the original all-way stop can easily be restored.

**Cost:** The estimated total demonstration cost is not expected to exceed \$30,000. The BWBC proposes that up to \$12,000 of the DPW walk/bike set aside from the FY 2015 and/or FY 2016 budgets be used to pay a portion of the cost of the demonstration. Since roundabouts benefit car traffic safety and traffic flow as well as that of pedestrians and bicyclists, it is appropriate that some funding for this project come from the general transportation budget as well.

We recognize that this proposal does not follow the DPW's general approach to infrastructure improvements in the City. We understand that whatever intersection is chosen for this demonstration may not have been designated 'broken and needing to be fixed'. However, we believe the educational benefits, as well as the improvements in the functionality of the chosen intersection, justify the cost, and the effort involved in planning and implementation.

The BWBC enthusiastically endorses the efforts of Mayor Miro Weinberger to make Burlington a more Walk-Friendly and Bike-Friendly Community, and the establishment of the Go For Gold Leadership Team. A roundabout demonstration will accelerate the improvement of the city street network and help make Burlington a more Walk-Friendly and Bike-Friendly Community.

We would be happy to discuss this proposal with you in more detail at your convenience. If approved, we look forward to supporting the effort with outreach and education.

Yours truly,

Burlington Walk Bike Council

**The Burlington Walk/Bike Steering Committee:**

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cc: Mayor Miro Weinberger  
DPW Commissioners % Chair Nathan Lavery  
Peter Owens, Director of CEDO