

The key to solving traffic?

The intersection of Jayhawk Street and Ravensworth Road used to be a normal intersection.

But that is not the case anymore.

The Virginia Department of Transportation introduced a “modular mini roundabout” at the intersection of the traffic throughput, its closeness to a major artery, the width of the existing roadway and the chance to manage a bike lane and pedestrian crossings. They believe the roundabout will provide safety and operational improvements to move more vehicles through the intersection with fewer delays. It is part of VDOT’s pilot project to introduce more roundabouts in different regions around Virginia.

But why did they choose to introduce a roundabout?

Compared to stop signs and traffic signals, roundabouts reduce the likelihood and severity of collisions by reducing traffic speeds and minimizing T-bone and head-on collisions. Roundabouts are very popular in European countries like France and the United Kingdom, and now the US have jumped on the trend as well.

However, many students disagree with the benefits of the roundabout.

“I think the roundabout has made people more aggressive, as many people try to rush into the flow of traffic,” senior Rohan Miah said. “Also, the side paths of the roundabout are kind of narrow. The idea of a roundabout is good, but I feel like it could’ve been executed better, maybe putting a yield sign or some other notation to warn drivers that like to rush. Another thing to consider is the people around here are often poor drivers, but that’s another topic.”

Senior Maisha Maliha voiced her opinions on the roundabout as well.

“I don’t like the roundabout. I never know when I’m supposed to go because cars are always stopping and I’m going and it’s confusing and it’s kind of really narrow and there’s not enough space for me to turn and I hit parts of it sometimes,” Maliha said.

A common sentiment among students is that they prefer the old intersection as opposed to the new one.

“I feel like (the intersection) was slightly better before without the presence of the roundabout as drivers would stop to wait for passing traffic. Honestly though, with a more polished roundabout and signs it could be improved,” Miah said.

Senior Patrick Brown disagrees that the roundabout can be improved.

“I don’t think it really works because everyone still goes the same speed. I’m not sure it can be fixed because people are too dumb. I preferred the old intersection more,” Brown said. The roundabout has only been around for three months, so maybe people’s opinions will change as they get more and more used to the roundabout and the idea of yielding to traffic, but only time will tell if that will be the case. Surely current sentiments should show to VDOT that their proposition to continue to add more roundabouts is not the right one.