

**Gambier Village Council Meeting
Special Meeting
April 22, 2024**

Council Present: Liz Forman, Alison Furlong, Kaitlin Sockman, Natalie Wright
Absent: Rakia Faber, Morgan Giles

Also, attending: Leeman Kessler, Mayor; RC Wise, Village Administrator; Diane Steinmetz, Fiscal officer; Clint Bailey, Solicitor; Ian Smith, Kenyon College; Residents: Matt Bonaudi, Eric Holdner, Nancy Wainwright, Jim Lenthe, Jan Thomas, George Kopsick; College Township: Bernie Ingles, Linda Engles; Jean Wyatt, Weathervane owner; Grant Richey, Knox Pages.

Virtual, attending: Charlie Rice, Anna Duke Reach, Ann Moffat, Sheriff David Shaffer, Miriam Dean-Otting, Kerry Strader, Buffy Halinan, David, Kert Baldwin, Iphone user.

Mayor Kessler called the Meeting to Order at 7:01 pm

Council Discussion:

1. Answer questions and provide current information about the roundabout the Ohio Department of Transportation is constructing at the intersection of SR 308/ SR 229.

Council addressed the audience, stating that they encourage them to ask questions and to encourage others to attend the 43022-day event as they will be having all of this information available also.

Mayor Kessler reviewed the previously submitted questions, see attachment.

May 28th current start date, finish is slated for early November.

Question: will there be flashing lights at the crosswalk such as higher up on 308? Answer: Currently that is not slated for the project.

Question: Will the flooding that occurred several weeks ago in the field be addressed? Ian Smith, Kenyon College, replied that they have worked with ODOT to assist with the overflow that has been occurring over the past several years. Not sure if the raised earth will remain as a water dike or not.

Question: Concern over the tree removal that has occurred in the construction zone.

Answer: It was determined that the tree removal needed to be done earlier to deter the migrating bats from nesting in the zone and being disrupted during construction.

Question: Where will the retaining wall be located?

Answer: Ian Smith assisted with the available diagrams to show where the retaining wall will be located.

Question: How close it will be to the BFEC trail in that area

Mayor Kessler stated he has spoken with staff at the BFEC and they will be adjusting the path so that hikers will not be too close to the retaining wall.

Sheriff David Shaffer, question on if the roundabout will be a circle or more oblong?

Answer: It will be a circle.

Resident concern: On vehicles or truckers unfamiliar with the area will there be signs to indicate that a roundabout is coming up on the road.

Mayor Kessler, stated that ODOT does not currently have plans for additional signs, being that it is a state route ODOT determines the signage.

Question: Can you provide additional information on the retaining wall, what it will look like, who is responsible for the upkeep.

Answer: We are still in the process of the coloring options with ODOT, but the Village will be responsible for the upkeep of the wall.

Council stated that once the mock-ups for the coloring/style of the retaining wall are available we will make them available for residents to review and provide their opinions on the options.

Council Forman, stated that the retaining wall is now not as far back as was originally anticipated.

Council Sockman, we were also very concerned with the retaining wall. We tried to do it as more of a natural wall. Ian Smith stated after ODOT completed a soil analysis it was determined that it was not possible, so the retaining wall had to be used. The highest point will be 17 feet, and length about 200 feet.

Question: Why are we not using any of the great natural stone in the area?

Council Wright stated because of the cost and the upkeep would be significantly more expensive.

Jim Lenthe, what will the construction do to the water line over there?

VA Wise, they will be laying a new line, it will be a one-day replacement to lay the line.

Bill Seder, Mt Vernon City Schools Superintendent, stated that they know this is happening for safety and they are all about the safety of the students. What time it will begin?

Council stated that once it begins that intersection will be closed for the duration of the project.

VA Wise, stated that ODOT will be setting up 6 different flashing signs stating that the road will be closing.

George Kopcsick, stated that he is glad that the road will be completely closed down to get it done quickly because in New Albany they are not closing for their construction and it will be taking at least 18 months to complete.

Discussion over what will be placed in the center of the roundabout. The thought is to be doing wildflowers, want to not cause the maintenance crew to have to mow the area.

Sheriff Shaffer, will there be barricades set up, will there be a way to deter people from trying to drive past them and they have to try to turn around at the Observatory Road?

Answer: There will be a barricade set up near Lower Gambier Road.

Question: What is the size of the center of the roundabout going to be.

VA Wise will find that information for future sharing.

Was stated that the suggested speed for the roundabout is 20 miles per hour. Discussion amongst the crowd on if people will go that speed.

Mayor Kessler stated that the Village is possibly going to host the BFEC fall festival at the Gambier community center park area for 2024 so that the long-standing event does not need to be cancelled during the construction period.

It was also stated that the Pelotonia group has been informed of the construction and that the information on the closure will be passed along to those involved.

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Kessler at 7:46 p.m.

Questions regarding Roundabout received prior to special meeting

How will large vehicles be able to maneuver through the roundabout?

ODOT response:

- The truck aprons (area between the central island and travel way) as well as the NE and SW corners are designed to allow larger vehicles to use this space. The apron is mountable by larger vehicles, but not intended for passenger vehicles. The outer truck aprons are intended to deter passenger vehicles but allow the larger vehicles farm machinery to traverse through the intersection.
- The appurtenances (lights, signs, etc.) were set further back from the roundabout to allow large vehicles to traverse the travel way.
- The curbing along the outside was designed to be mountable. The top of the curbing is a rolled top such that large vehicles/machinery can traverse the area.

With the rerouting of traffic in and out of the village on 308, will there be a light (temporary or permanent) put at the intersection of 308 and 36? Traffic has increased along 36, which can make it difficult to turn left off of 308.

ODOT Response:

There are no plans to place any sort of traffic signal at the intersection of US36 & SR308, temporary or otherwise. As we begin the construction of the project and the detour is implemented, project staff will be minor maintenance of traffic as it relates to the project directly and the affected area and adjust when needed. With safety in mind, we will do our best to minimize impact and inconvenience to the motoring public affected by the detour for the roundabout. Nonetheless, this is a temporary traffic pattern that will be put into place for a few months while the roundabout is constructed, and traffic will be impacted. Adjustments in driving habits and patience with the construction process are appreciated.

While I understand that the official detour out of the village will be 308 to 36, what route is proposed for those travelling East on 229 and turning off at Eastern Star? I am concerned about the volume and speed of traffic we may see on New Gambier Road. How will safe speed limits be enforced? Will there be increased school bus traffic?

Village response:

Neither the Village or ODOT is advising anyone use Eastern Star to New Gambier road as the detour during the roundabout construction. However, we know some motorists will take that route because they know the area or their mapping software on their phone or car may offer them that option.

ODOT advises residents noticing increase in traffic, speeding, property damage, etc., to notify law enforcement which in your case will be the Knox County Sheriff.

PID 115984 KNO SR 229/308 13.06/0.00 - Public Involvement FAQ

- ***How is the project funded? How was the intersection selected for safety improvements?***
 - The project is funded by ODOT's Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). The HSIP's primary objective is to reduce fatal and injury crashes on Ohio's roadways. The SR 229/SR 308 intersection was selected for safety improvements as a result of a safety study which produced a roundabout as a long-term crash countermeasure. After multiple coordination meetings with local agencies, a roundabout was chosen as a preferred countermeasure after trial of various low-cost countermeasures. A funding request for a roundabout was considered and approved by the HSIP Committee.
- ***When will construction start and finish?***
 - Construction is planned to start in Summer 2024 and finish in Fall of 2024.
- ***Will the project construct sidewalk, multiuse path or a trail adjacent to or through the SR 229/SR 308 intersection?***
 - The project will not principally build pedestrian or bicycle facilities, but the intersection improvements will accommodate future bike/ped infrastructure within the intersection area.
- ***Will access to Laymon Road (Kokosing River Access, Kokosing Gap Trail Access, Brown Family Environmental Center, etc.) be maintained during construction?***
 - No, due to project constraints, the roundabout must be constructed under a full closure while traffic is detoured. ODOT will keep the construction contract window as short as possible to reduce the inconvenience to the traveling public. ODOT will work with Village of Gambier, College Township, and Kenyon College officials during project development and construction to make the construction schedule as accommodating as possible. The planned detour route will be US 36 to US 62.
- ***Will the Kokosing River be impacted by the project?***
 - The project's earthwork limits may impact the river's northeastern bank, but measures will be taken during project development and construction to mitigate environmental impacts to the Kokosing River.
- ***Will semi-trucks and farm machinery be able to navigate the roundabout?***
 - Yes, the roundabout will be designed to accommodate semi-trucks, farm machinery, school buses as well as passenger vehicles.
- ***What feature(s) will be installed in the roundabout's center island?***
 - ODOT is discussing landscaping features of the roundabout's central island with Village of Gambier officials during project development. These details are yet to be determined.

ROUNDABOUTS

MAKING INTERSECTIONS SAFER AND MORE EFFICIENT



Roundabouts are growing in popularity as more and more transportation agencies recognize the increased safety and traffic-moving efficiency they bring to intersections.

Safety

The most common justification for a roundabout is safety. This is because roundabouts only have 8 potential conflict points vs. 32 at a traditional intersection. Studies by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) show that roundabouts achieve a 44% reduction in crashes and reduce serious injury and deadly crashes by nearly 90% at two-way stop intersections. When roundabouts replace a traffic signal, FHWA found a 48% reduction in crashes and nearly 80% drop in serious injury and deadly crashes.

Efficiency

Roundabouts can move traffic more efficiently which reduces delays and fuel consumption. This is because traffic generally doesn't need to come to a full stop at the intersection. A study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) estimated that the conversion of 10 percent of the signalized intersections in the United States to roundabouts would have reduced vehicle delays by more than 981 million hours and fuel consumption by more than 654 million gallons in 2018.

Larger Vehicles

Ohio is a state that grows things and moves things. There are often concerns about how large farm machinery or semi-trucks will navigate roundabouts. One way this is accomplished is with truck aprons - an area between the central island and the traveled way that is mountable by larger vehicles but not used by passenger vehicles.

Public Opinion

Roundabouts typically aren't the most popular solution with the public. Much of that is due to a lack of education about their benefits and them being a relatively new traffic pattern for many areas of Ohio. Public reaction usually flips to positive within a year or two of them being installed and open to traffic. An IIHS study of three communities where single-lane roundabouts replaced stop sign-controlled intersections found that only 31% of drivers supported the change before construction. However, after more than a year support soared to 70%.



Learn more at transportation.ohio.gov/roundabouts

ROUNDBABOUT

SPECIAL INFORMATIONAL PUBLIC MEETING APRIL 22, 2024, at 7 pm

A special meeting at the Community Center is set for April 22, 2024, at 7pm. Up to date information about the upcoming Roundabout will be shared. This session is designed to answer your questions about the roundabout and will be led by Mayor Kessler and Village Administrator Wise. You may submit questions ahead so that we can seek appropriate answers from ODOT via email to mayor@villageofgambier.org or villageadministrator@villageofgambier.org or you may ask the questions live at the session.

Note: This meeting is informational and only the roundabout project will be discussed.



Preliminary field work has begun on the roundabout planned this year at the intersection of State Routes 229 and 308. Ohio Department of Transportation indicated at their pre-construction meeting that message board signs announcing the closure of that intersection will be in place two weeks prior to construction. The \$3.2 million project includes the construction of a single-lane roundabout with a pedestrian crossing as well as a shared use path along SR 308 to the Ward/Wiggin Street intersection.

The closure starts **May 28, 2024**, and goes through November 1.

For updates on this project and others, follow Village Council discussion in the minutes at the link below <https://www.villageofgambier.org/minutes-and-agendas>