



[Round and round](#)

Posted by [jhill](#) at 5/13/2009 5:27 PM EDT



Glens Falls roundabout

By now you've probably heard: downtown Binghamton is in line to get a [roundabout](#). There has been much wailing and gnashing of teeth from downtown business owners and writers of letters to the editor, among many others. All four of Mayor Matthew T. Ryan's challengers have said they are against the design.

Just wait, the mayor says, you'll come around. ([Read the Guest Viewpoint Ryan wrote for this paper here, in PDF form](#)) As evidence, he points to Glens Falls, whose recent downtown roundabout project provoked similar opposition. So what's the verdict there?

Mark Mahoney, editorial writer ([and Pulitzer Prize winner](#)) for the Glens Falls newspaper, the Post-Star, writes in an e-mail:

There was a lot of controversy over putting it in. We (the Post-Star) heavily endorsed it, saying it couldn't make the intersection any worse and that something had to be done there.

It's actually worked better than anticipated.

It's a one lane circle with a truck apron in the middle, so there's no confusion over where you should be. Traffic is forced to slow down because you have to yield to the driver who's already in it. Pedestrians can cross it very easily because the crossing distances have been cut down and there are islands halfway across. Fire trucks and ambulances get through it easily because there's room for people to pull over for them. Big trucks, like fire engines and plows, have plenty of room. It wasn't a problem clearing it of snow, even with the winter we had. If there are no cars in the circle, you just go, instead of waiting for a stupid light. That's great during the off-

peak hours.

Even when it's busy, you still get through it faster than when there was a traffic light there.

It's actually helped business downtown because people used to avoid the heart of the city because of the five-way traffic signals. Now, it's actually faster going through the roundabout than taking some of the other "short-cuts."

And it looks nice. They put flowers in the middle, and they decorate it for Christmas and shoot fireworks out of it on Fourth of July, that kind of stuff.

Even the original opponents, including Betty Little (state Sen. Elizabeth O'C. Little, R-Queensbury), have had to admit it's worked.

It's important to note that the intersection in Glens Falls had five streets coming together at one spot, and Binghamton's roundabout will connect just three: Court, Chenango and Exchange streets. So maybe our intersection is not as poorly constructed as theirs was, and thus not as desperately in need of an overhaul (having never been to Glens Falls, I have no idea). But there's no denying the timed light/three-way intersection design there is annoying and could use SOME kind of change.

Binghamton's project also includes a lot of additional infrastructure and beautification work. It has a \$5.8 million price tag, with the city kicking in just 5 percent of the cost, thanks to federal and state grants.