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To: MDOT-PRESSRELEASES@LISTSERV.MICHIGAN.GOV
Subject: [MDOT-PRESSRELEASES] MDOT invites media to preview I-75/M-81 roundabouts

in Saginaw County

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Agency: Transportation

MDOT invites media to preview I-75/M-81 roundabouts in Saginaw County Dec 04, 2006

December 1, 2006 - - As crews prepare to remove the orange barrels, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is inviting members of the media to preview two new traffic roundabouts at I-75/M-81 in Buena Vista Township. The media preview will take place Wednesday, Dec. 6, from 9 to 11 a.m., at the MDOT Saginaw East Side Garage, 3510 E. Washington Ave. (on M-81 at I-75). (Note to media: This is the back building, the one farthest south.)

MDOT engineers will guide participants through an interactive, simulated electronic display, which includes information on how to navigate a roundabout. Reporters then will be able to drive through the newly constructed interchange before it opens to the public on Wednesday, Dec. 6.

"We hope the local media will help familiarize motorists with the design and use of roundabouts so that people will be more open to using them," said Robert Ranck, MDOT's Bay City Transportation Service Center manager. "Roundabouts are designed to control speeds through busy intersections. They reduce both the number and severity of accidents."

MDOT engineers confirm that a projected increase in traffic volume for the area was a factor in the decision to construct the roundabouts at the I-75/M-81 interchange. Heavy truck traffic that often resulted in backups, while drivers waited for the signal to change, also was a consideration, along with the need to decrease the number of traffic accidents occurring at the interchange.

"Typically, traffic delays through modern roundabout intersections are much lower than for other traffic configurations," said Louie Taylor, MDOT delivery engineer. "T-bone accidents, resulting in fatalities when motorists run red lights at the intersection, are also reduced because motorists are required to drive through a circular roundabout intersection at reduced speeds."

"Modern roundabouts follow a yield-at-entry rule. Drivers approaching a modern roundabout slow down and yield to traffic inside the roundabout, where motorists have the right of way," said Ranck.

Studies by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety confirm that this approach to highway safety and traffic management can reduce crashes up to 70 percent, injury accidents by up to 80 percent, and fatalities by 90 percent. A study by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) supports this claim, stating roundabouts reduce fatalities up to 90 percent, with a 76 percent reduction in injury crashes.

"Upon completion, this project will promote safety and improve traffic flow for years to come," said Bay Region Engineer Terry Anderson.

In addition to the construction of two modern roundabouts, this work also includes replacing the M-81 bridge over I-75, reconstructing the ramps, and making drainage, lighting, landscaping, and safety improvements on M-81 between Outer Drive and Wolf Road in Buena Vista Township.

More information about navigating roundabouts is available on the MDOT Web site at