



THE STEADY BEACON

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Speed! It thrills. It kills. This assumed universal enemy of safety appears to be an afterthought on crash reports even as a simple variance between two numbers is used to justify a massive and unending revenue stream. In the free market, where value is created, speed is the foundation of a robust economy, being the selling point for drive-thru and delivery and even featured in the tagline of a High Plains motorway operator. Speed is measured, managed, and monetized, often marginalized, and most assuredly misunderstood.

On urban streets and in areas where vulnerable users are prevalent or even expected, managing speed is the chief goal of the traffic operations engineer. Such an art must recognize that geometric design speaks volumes more than traffic control devices. Five graceful radii in the modern roundabout induce speed harmonization, ensuring adequate sight distance for the widest variety of users. Performing under yield control, modern roundabouts allow for the selection of any adequate gap by any entering vehicle. Attention to the circulating roadway, the priority roadway, reduces task saturation and induces compliance and coordination while preserving priority according to vehicle position and presence. A stunning contradiction manifests in the ability of roundabouts to reduce travel speeds while correspondingly reducing delay and travel time.

While desirable in a roundabout, speed harmonization on motorways often represents a failure to assign and respect priority by position. While roundabouts normalize the performance vehicles and operators, the magic of the motorway ensues in the promotion of order through unconstrained accommodation of diverse capabilities and limitations.

The benefits of order are evident when slower and heavier vehicles keep right while the left lane is reserved for the most flexible and capable combinations of vehicles users, affording priority by position *and* performance. Where roundabouts calm and coordinate traffic by inducing larger and heavier vehicles to obtain the same speed as a bicycle, well-policed motorways promote safety by releasing the user to perform at speed and thereby at attention, conferring convenience to all on the safest and most flexible roads in the world. Accommodating speed and promoting order on the motorway is the key to a safe system and the pathway to a world where the courteous are quick to yield.