

TAMC Board Meeting 3-25-26

Agenda Item #7, State Route 68 Status Report

I appreciate Doug Bilse providing a status report on the project and answering some but not all of my questions at last month's meeting.

Increases Costs versus Benefits

The status report acknowledges that the **costs of the roundabouts has significantly increased (410% according to his report's projected costs)** since they were initially introduced in 2017 and thus impacting the benefit-cost analysis **significantly**. Is the report's total of \$69,600,000 just for construction since it is much less than the budgeted total of \$126,304,000 for Phase 1 in the 2026 Integrated Funding? While the costs have increased dramatically, the "benefit" of the proposed roundabouts on peak commute time has remained the same at an alleged and insignificant 5 minute reduction on the PM commute and "marginal" if any reduction on the AM peak commute according to computer simulations. After asking Caltrans for their test data on the newly introduced 2 lane, so called "hybrid" roundabouts, over the original, safer, single lane roundabouts, they provided data that showed no improvement and in fact, slightly worse (15 to 12 VHD) performance. **(Listed below from Final EIR)** So why are they continually being pushed when they have been acknowledged by TAMC staff in presentations to the Board to **increase emergency response time and increase the total commute during the approximate 20 hours per day of non-peak commute time.**

Taken from Page 164 of Final EIR

As shown in Table 2.1.9.11, the morning peak hour Vehicle Hours of Delay performance of updated Alternative 1 is marginally better than the No-Build condition

Table 2.1.9.11 Morning Peak Hour Vehicle Hours of Delay Comparison by Alternative and Horizon Year

Alternative Morning Peak	2025 Vehicle Hours of Delay	2025 Vehicle Hours of Delay Savings	2035 Vehicle Hours of Delay	2035 Vehicle Hours of Delay Savings	2045 Vehicle Hours of Delay	2045 Vehicle Hours of Delay Savings
No-Build Alternative	259	Not Applicable	455	Not Applicable	747	Not Applicable
Alternative 1 Roundabouts (updated)	247	12	436	19	625	122
Alternative 2 Expanded Signalized Intersection	116	143	130	325	162	585

Slide #12 from Presentation to Board 4-23-24

Issues with Roundabouts

- Side street waits for gaps to enter
- Always slows down traffic- even when traffic is very light
- Slows down emergency vehicles
- Environmental impacts and high cost

Negative Environmental Impact

In reviewing the Final EIR, I happened to notice the significant number of trees (4,000) that would be removed to install the 9 roundabouts so how many would be removed in this Phase 1? Details on page 185 of the Final EIR are:

“Both of the Build Alternatives would have considerable effects on the visual/aesthetic setting of the project in regard to its visual character and quality and would contribute to resource changes along the State Route 68 corridor. · Visual Character: Both Build Alternatives would be **inconsistent** with the existing visual character of the State Route 68 corridor, resulting in an increased scale due to **retaining walls, increased signage and other roadside elements**. These elements would become dominant to the rural surroundings, particularly due to the mass scale and shape of the **new retaining walls**. The existing diversity would be lessened with removal of a large number of trees and other vegetation. As discussed in Section 2.3, **Alternative 1 would remove up to 4,000 trees** and Alternative 2 would remove up to 5,500 trees of varying sizes.”

Benefit-Cost Analysis Timing

It is unclear from Doug’s report how GHD is conducting a benefit-cost analysis using a baseline of adaptive signal operations (as describe in the report) since the Adaptive system has not even started to actually operate and that doing **a complete analysis of its performance in various traffic conditions** will take **6 months to a year**. More detail needs to be revealed to the Board and the Public, as to how and over what length of time the AI Adaptive will be evaluated to demonstrate a fair and complete evaluation. Trying to make a comprehensive decision on Adaptive performance after a month or two of operations is not a fair and complete test of the system, especially when it will be used as the “baseline” for evaluating the cost-benefit of the roundabouts.

Benefit-Cost Analysis for Safety

In addressing conflict points and accidents, I am glad that the benefit-cost analysis described in Doug's report, will take a new look at crash data on Hwy 68 which per Caltrans own accident history showed no fatalities in any of the 9 intersections. Hopefully the analysis will include **details on the recent 3 fatalities that occurred within 3 weeks in the same 2 lane roundabout on SR 156 near Hollister**, and show how those fatalities would not occur in the proposed roundabouts on Hwy 68. The analysis also needs to include the Arizona Study that showed a **62% increase in accidents** over the signal intersections they replaced and show the **increased conflict points that the merging** of the "hybrid" roundabouts produce.

Two Active Projects Proposal

Doug's report lists "two active projects" that would occur together, as confirmed in discussions with Doug, where AI Adaptive would be used at 6 of the more western intersections and 3 roundabouts would be installed in place of the existing Adaptive systems at the 3 most eastern intersections (Phase 1). So after installing and testing AI Adaptive at all 9 intersections, is it really being proposed to install the Phase 1 roundabouts regardless of the Adaptive performance and is that logical and optimal for Adaptive performance along the entire corridor. Since the AI Adaptive system works together as a system and communicates between intersections, will that reduction in 3 intersections reduce the performance along the entire corridor. Has TAMC asked Miovision, the Adaptive vendor, what that will do to the system performance and what was the answer? The logical decision would be to thoroughly evaluate the performance of the AI Adaptive on the entire corridor and then determine if the roundabouts can significantly improve on those commute reduction results given the cost-benefit analysis and new benchmark.

Lower Speeds Increase Capacity

Doug's report introduces a concept that since roundabouts will slow traffic down (which makes sense as a well-known "traffic calming device") they will then increase roadway capacity. Is this a new sales pitch for the roundabouts and why does that not translate into a better overall commute time through the corridor per computer simulation? What are the actual referenced "Studies" and were they done with a series of roundabouts on a busy highway? If that works, then why not just lower the overall speed on the corridor to 35 MPH? Doug keeps saying that roundabouts are "expected" to reduce queues for commuters (does not state by how much) but the computer simulations done by Caltrans don't reflect an actual reduction that will be noticed by the commuters.

Project Costs Significant Increase

As mentioned earlier the report total is \$69 Million versus the Budget total of \$126 Million for Phase 1 so why the difference? Does the \$69M include land acquisition and other costs and **what are the projected cost for construction that will be done in 2028 or beyond? Will it continue escalating at the same significant percentage?** What part of the \$69M is for the 2 Wildlife Crossings? The Caltrans estimated costs done in December 2023 had the current costs at \$626,400 for the San Benancio crossing and \$1,467,600 for the Laureles Grade crossing.

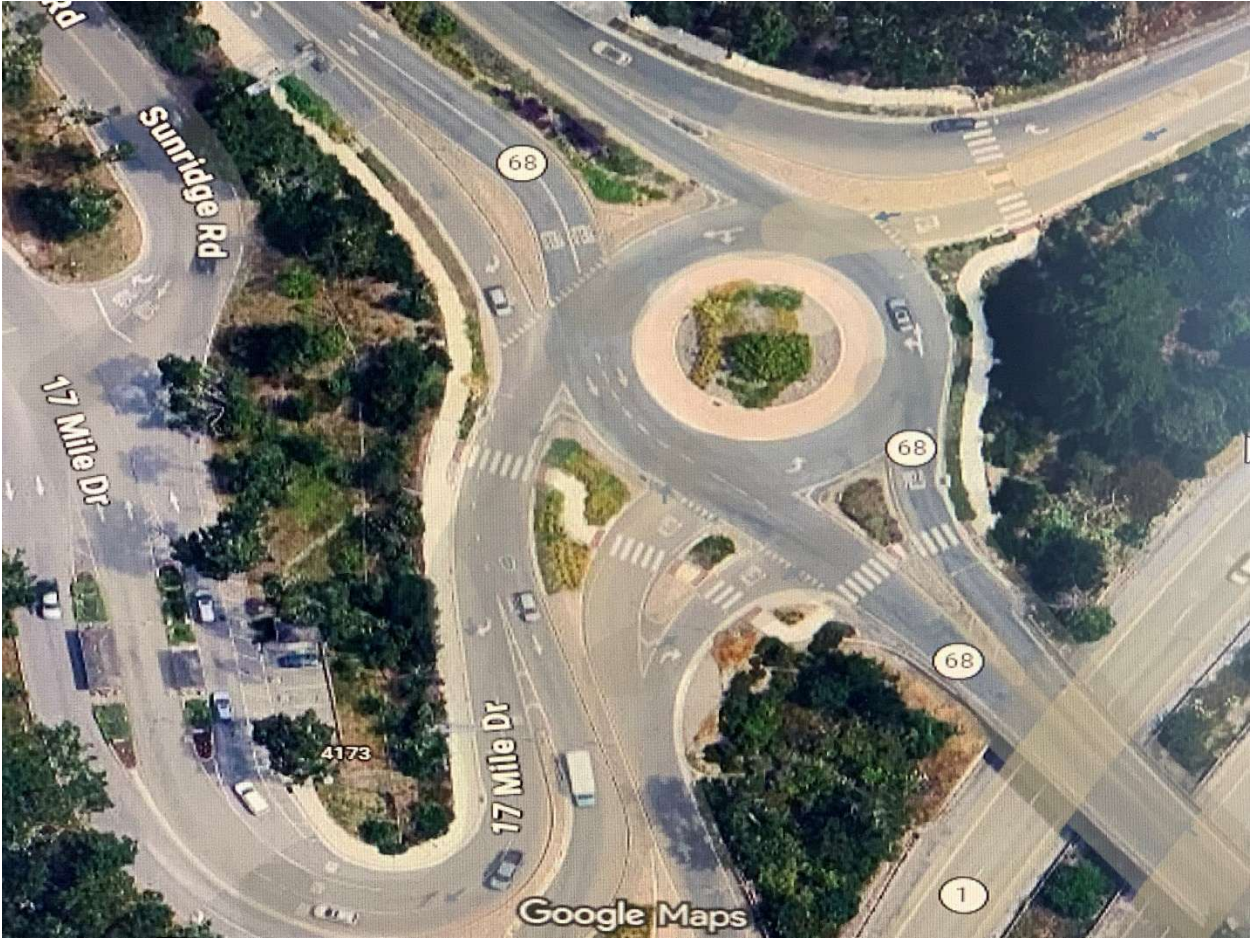
Revised Schedule and “Burn Rate”

While the reduction of a “Burn Rate” of taxpayer funds on Phase 1 final design is appreciated and appropriate, a continued burn rate of \$150K per month while AI Adaptive is being evaluated is still a potential waste of money and should be discussed. The Board needs to evaluate the huge total cost increases along with the newly revealed and revised minimal benefits and consider putting a full pause on Phase 1 until the Adaptive evaluation is thoroughly completed. The Hwy 68 project facts and costs are significantly different than what was presented to the Board in 2017 and 2023 and a fresh and prudent evaluation is needed as you consider the best use of taxpayer funds. With the current budget deficits in California “burning funds” is not a wise choice and there are plenty of existing needs that need that funding.

Pebble Beach versus 2 Lane “Hybrid”

The comparison that Doug makes in his report that the Phase 1 “hybrid” roundabouts are “similar” to the Holman/Pebble Beach roundabout is **misleading and not accurate**. The Pebble Beach roundabout produced congestion reduction due to its truly “hybrid” design where all of the **traffic from Hwy 1 south to Holman does not even go through the roundabout as well as the Holman traffic traveling east to Pebble Beach, which also does not go into the roundabout**. Plus, all of the lanes are single except for a short section of 2 lanes and the traffic pattern is different than Hwy 68. Unlike Pebble Beach, **all of the traffic traveling on Hwy 68 must go into the 2 lane roundabout and then yield to each other as they merge back into the single lane on the other side**. This merging also increases the conflict points and chance of more crashes as vehicles try to merge back together with the aggressive drivers taking advantage of the passing opportunity. It seems the main reason to call Phase 1 roundabouts “hybrid” is to try to make people believe, without showing the details, that they would operate in a similar way as Pebble Beach, which is **not accurate**.

Pebble Beach/Holman Roundabout

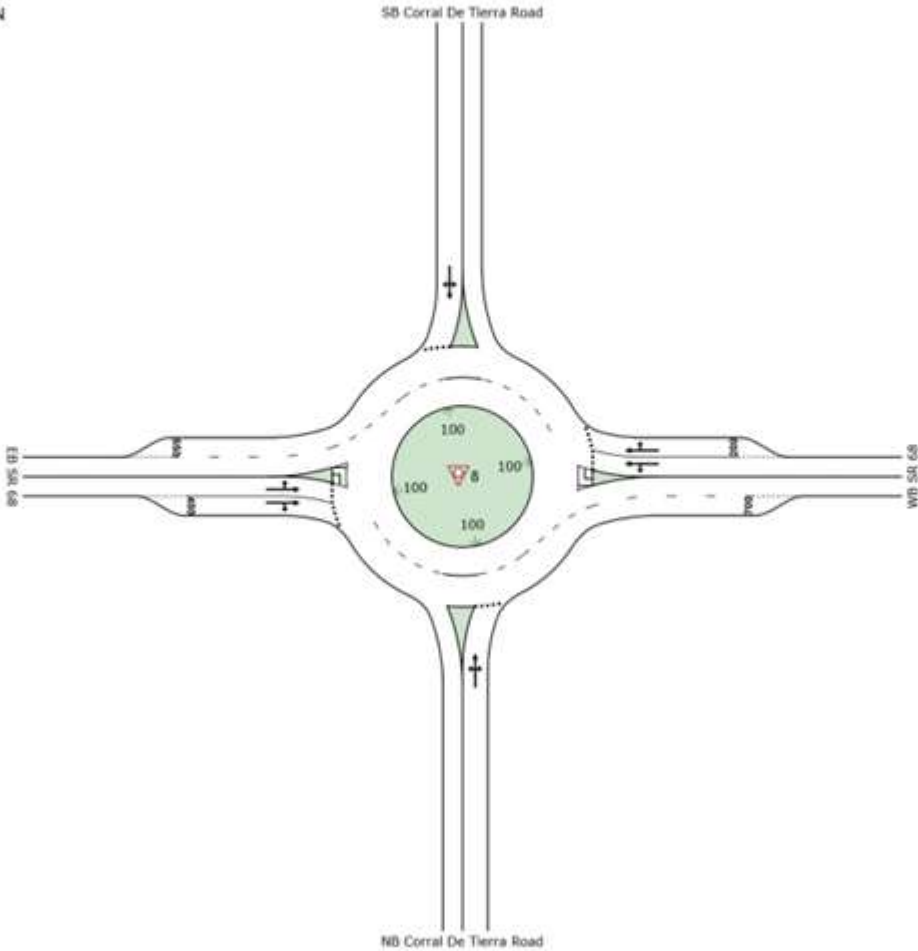


Modified 2 Lane "Hybrid" Roundabout at Corral de Tierra Rd

SITE LAYOUT

Site: 8 [INT-08_2016 PM_Alt02_SR 68 / Corral De Tierra Road]

Roundabout



Thank you,
Dwight Stump