

New wrinkle on trips to Shenandoah wine country

Roundabout project seen as an asset for tourists, residents and businesses in Amador County

ty News March 2, 2018



An aerial view of the new State Route 49 roundabout in Plymouth.

The Valley Springs News / March 2, 2018

PLYMOUTH- Times are changing in the town of Plymouth, which was established as a Gold Country mining camp in 1852.

Now adjacent State Route 49 is changing, as well. To support the economy and enhance the safety of those who travel on SR-49, Caltrans partnered with Plymouth and the Amador County Transportation Commission to convert an intersection with four stop signs into a user-friendly roundabout.

The \$5.8 million project also upgraded the intersection to the standards of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act, providing easier access for large trucks and tractors bringing in supplies and hauling out wines grapes, produce and livestock.

Rather than all four vehicles being forced to come to a complete stop, idling their engines and contributing to noise and air pollution, motorists now glide through the roundabout with minimal delay. It also benefits farm equipment turning east into Shenandoah Road, and

commercial trucks turning west on Main Street or passing through on the way to Jackson or Placerville.

“We’ve promised California new solutions to old problems and this roundabout is another step in that direction,” said Caltrans District 10 Director Dennis T. Agar, noting it is the first roundabout on the state highway in the Sierra Gold Country. “The numbers show roundabouts reduce incidents while enhancing a community. Safe roads and beautiful scenery. That’s a California highway.”

Safety is Caltrans’ number one priority, and shifting this traditional rural intersection into a roundabout helps fulfill that commitment. Roundabouts reduce serious injuries and fatalities by 80 percent.

The Plymouth Roundabout also benefits pedestrians and cyclists, who now use sidewalks and crosswalks to maneuver through the intersection. Caltrans placed pedestrian islands at the four entrances to the roundabout, for those needing to stop after crossing one lane of traffic.

Roundabouts claim traffic and reduce speeds at crossroads such as this and require less maintenance to operate. Because vehicles are moving through the intersection, roundabouts also curtail greenhouse gas emissions and eliminate long lines of vehicles waiting at the stop signs.

The center of the roundabout provides a landscaping opportunity for the city, which is planning to install historic mining ore carts to celebrate the gold country heritage at the site.

“This creates a gateway to Plymouth, providing a boost to our tourism while benefiting our local economy and our ranchers, Plymouth City Manager Jeff Gardner said. “Our residents win, too, because the structure of the roundabout makes this a safe zone for folks walking or riding their bikes.

The SR-49 Plymouth Roundabout Project was awarded to George Reed Construction of Modesto.