

Remarks of Ken Sides, PE, CNU-a, LCI at the Book Launch Party for *Ronda Loves Roundabouts*, 5/18/23

This wonderful book is an important breakthrough. I know of at least five books for children that introduce youngsters to signalized intersections. The books are meant to teach safety, of course, but also have the effect of normalizing signalized intersections as a part of the fabric of civilized life—which, of course, they are.

They are also complex, with at least two dozen rules that must be followed perfectly, every time, without fail, or else. The terrible penalty for mistakes should never be visited upon any child, but it is, every day. Worse, which rules apply to whom changes every few seconds and the only way for a child to know what's going on at any given instant is through a system of color-coded bulbs that constantly go on and off. To put it bluntly, signalized intersections are not the optimal situation for children.

Conventional intersections can never be made efficient or safe for anyone, not people in trucks, in cars, on bicycles, on skateboards, in wheelchairs or using walkers or canes—let alone made safe for children. Every year some 8,000 or so people perish at conventional intersections in the United States alone, and many are children—too many. Worldwide, traffic injuries are the leading cause of death for children and young adults. Traffic crashes cost most countries 3% of their gross domestic product. To put that in perspective, the United States military budget is only slightly more at 3.5% of GDP.

The biggest tragedy in all this is that many of these fatalities need not have happened in the first place. For 20 years the United States Federal Highway Administration has been saying conventional intersections have 10x the fatality rate of modern roundabouts. Ten times! Let that sink in.

After a quarter century of progress, the United States now has some 10,000 modern roundabouts. That's an important milestone. But let me put that milestone in perspective for you. During the same period, Spain has built 35,000 modern roundabouts. Since the United States has 7 times the population of Spain, the equivalent here would be 246,000 roundabouts, not 10,000.

We're all impressionable at an early age. Jonathan's book is a uniquely giant step toward filling a critical gap in traffic safety education of children. But it does more than educate. *Ronda Loves Roundabouts* inculcates a positive appreciation of modern roundabouts at an early age.

That planted seed, so to speak, benefits more than just the child, for those children will grow up to be adults receptive to proposed modern roundabouts and that strikes right at the core of what's behind the dismal rate of modern roundabout deployment in the United States. Pushback from fearful adults, amplified by elected leaders who follow, not lead, have hamstrung engineers and planners who want so badly to heed what the Federal Highway Administration has been telling us for so long. *Ronda* will instill knowledge and attitudes that in just one generation will benefit all of society.

So tonight, let's now celebrate this breakthrough, conceived by Jonathan French, Professional Engineer, and congratulate him and his team.

Ken Sides is a Senior Transportation Engineer at Sam Schwartz Engineering.