

Caltrans now a huge fan of roundabouts

By Tony Bizjak, Sacramento Bee

In the tiny town of Plymouth, gateway to Amador County's growing wine tourism area, road crews recently ripped out the four-way stop on a busy section of Highway 49 to replace it with a traffic approach that literally will have drivers going in circles.

Plopped in the middle of the intersection where Main Street crosses the highway, the big oval forces drivers to slow to 15 mph but doesn't require them to stop. Instead, traffic from four directions merges and flows in a choreographed, counterclockwise direction.

Roundabouts have suddenly become one of the state's trendiest traffic calming devices. After shying away from them for years, the state Department of Transportation is on a roundabout building spree, constructing 37, most in the last few years, with 100 more on the drawing boards.

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