

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Lily Haight with local news for March 10, 2021.

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Representatives from the Washington State Department of Transportation presented a proposal to add two new roundabouts along Highway 20 and Sims Way at the city council's workshop meeting on Monday. Dennis Engle from WSDOT described the plan for constructing the two roundabouts – one at the intersection of Mill Road and Discovery Road on Highway 20, and the other at the intersection of Sims Way and Kearney Street – next to the Penny Saver. These intersections currently have traffic lights that Engle said are obsolete. They have to have a lot of repairs done to keep them working and they're suspended on span wire instead of mast arms, as is the more modern way for hanging traffic lights, he said.

After WSDOT completed an Intersection Control Evaluation for those two intersections, they determined a roundabout would be the preferred option for traffic control – it's cheaper than replacing them with new traffic lights. Engle said roundabouts are also a safer option for traffic control, and they are easier to maintain over long periods of time. WSDOT's plan is to install compact roundabouts – which are smaller than traditional roundabouts – similar to the two that already exist on Sims Way. Scott Davis from WSDOT said after the installation of the two roundabouts on Sims Way, Port Townsend saw a 50% reduction in injury crashes at those intersections.

WSDOT's traffic study showed that at the Mill Road intersection, there are more than 1800 vehicles during the peak traffic hour and there have been 14 crashes in the last five years, seven of which have been injury crashes and three of which have been crashes with bicyclists. At the Kearney Street intersection, there are more than 1300 vehicles during peak hour and in the last five years there have been 16 crashes, eight of which have been injury crashes and two of which have involved pedestrians.

The two new roundabouts are currently in the design phase and construction won't begin until Spring of 2023. The project will be completed by the end of Summer 2023.

Councilmember Owen Rowe brought up a concern about how the roundabout at Mill Road and Highway 20 will interact with the intersection of Discovery Road. Right now, there is a stop sign at this intersection. Because this is a city road, it is not part of the WSDOT project, but Davis showed a design he had drawn up for the city which would essentially be a smaller roundabout where the stop sign currently is in addition to the larger roundabout on the highway.

Rowe also asked if adding roundabouts addresses the need for pedestrian safety. Davis said that roundabouts are intended to slow speeds and reduce the number of lanes that pedestrians need to cross. But while studies show they are safer for pedestrians, that doesn't necessarily mean that pedestrians feel comfortable crossing them, he added. If there are concerns later on, signs can be enhanced and beacons can be added to enhance safety.

Port Townsend resident Charlie Cannon expressed concern during the public comment period of the meeting that the Kearney Street roundabout would cause backup on Washington Street and Kearney Street when the Port Townsend ferry unloads cars. Engle replied that the city is actually working on getting funding to make improvements to Washington Street, and that the installation of the roundabout won't adversely affect those improvements. City public works director Steve King added at the end of the presentation that as WSDOT begins the design process for this project in the next few years, the city will be seeking funding opportunities for road improvements in those two areas.

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For those who might be interested in getting more involved in city government, there are a number of vacancies on city boards and committees right now. Six city boards have current and upcoming vacancies that can be filled by interested citizens: the PT arts commission, the historic preservation committee, the library advisory board, the lodging tax advisory committee, and the Parks, Recreation and Tree Advisory board. To learn more about each of these boards, go to [cityofpt.us](http://cityofpt.us) and visit the Boards/Commissions page (<https://cityofpt.us/bc/page/boards-and-commissions>), where you can find descriptions, applications and meeting schedules. All of these boards have meetings that are open to the public – so if you're interested in applying to be on a board, you can attend a meeting first to see what your responsibilities might be.

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Jefferson County's COVID-19 case numbers remain steady. There have been no new cases since last week, and there are currently zero cases in active isolation. According to Public Health Officer Doctor Tom Locke, social distancing, seasonal prevalence, and shots all play an important role in preventing the spread of COVID-19, so even though our case count is low, it's important to keep masking up, social distancing, and to get vaccinated when it becomes your turn. For the most up-to-date information, go to the Jefferson County public health website (<https://jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1466/Case-Information>) or the Jefferson County Facebook page.

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And that's it for today's local news. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon Monday through Saturday and at 5pm Monday through Thursday. You can contact us through [news@kptz.org](mailto:news@kptz.org). I'm Lily Haight. Thanks for listening.