

Roundabouts are as bad as soccer

Michael Costello/Lewiston Tribune

Okay Gallup. I give you permission to give me a call and ask me if this country is headed in the right direction or the wrong direction. I've always been willing to give the nation the benefit of the doubt. But now, I'll have to put myself into the wrong direction column.

A roundabout? In Asotin County? What is happening to this country?

Forget what your history books tell you. When the Pilgrims first set foot on the shores of the New World, they came to escape cruddy European sports, such as soccer. They left everything familiar behind to escape socialized medicine. And they endured a long dangerous trip in tiny, cramped sailing ships to free themselves from traffic circles.

And yet, today, one of the last holdouts of American exceptionalism is going forward with a roundabout. Last week, the Asotin County Public Works Director sold the Asotin County Commissioners on the merits of installing a traffic circle on the Fleshman Way interchange where it intersects with State Route 129. The plan calls for not one, but two roundabouts.

Traffic circles represent one of the greater horrors Europe has inflicted upon the New World. Traffic circles may have been a good idea for horse-drawn carriages, but they bring little but misery to drivers.

Roundabouts are two-lane circles with multiple ingress and egress points. When one enters a roundabout, one must enter the outside lane and hope that the traffic behind is in the inside lane. Drivers are then expected to immediately change lanes into the inside lane. Then, to escape the traffic circle, drivers must then switch lanes back into the outside lane.

So far as I can determine, roundabouts have two attractions: They are European in origin and they lend themselves to attractive landscaping.

First of all, what's so great about Europe? Too many Americans, particularly those occupying the left side of the ideological spectrum, suffer from an inexplicable inferiority complex when it comes to Europe.

Let's review recent European history. Europe entered the 20th century ruled primarily by monarchies. By the 1930s, Europe had cast off the yoke of kings, queens and princes, but had exchanged them for fascist and communist dictatorships. By that time, the U.S. democracy was well over a century old. For that matter, Europe could have learned much about democracy from Costa Rica, whose democracy was well into middle age.

Even though it had the U.S. and Costa Rica showing the way, much of the European land mass couldn't get the hang of self-government until only about a decade remained in the 20th century. How can we trust a continent that couldn't even govern itself to manage automobile traffic?

Aside from the Europeans' predisposition to subordinating their personal autonomy to collectivism and despotism, it's quite likely the misery inflicted by roundabouts contributes to the European preference for mass transit.

Roundabouts, especially those with more than four exits, are a misery to navigate. Even your GPS gets confused. And because so much of your attention is devoted to avoiding collisions with the other cars ensnared in the traffic circle, it's quite easy to miss your exit until you become familiar with your route.

If Asotin County goes forward with this roundabout idea, then they might want to include an underground light rail system in their plans as well.

Europe is also the continent that inflicted soccer upon the world. How can you trust people who are entertained by games routinely end in 0 - 0 ties? Soccer is such a miserable excuse for a sport the world championship takes weeks to settle and its fans are satisfied to settle this championship with penalty kicks.

Can you imagine a World Series decided by a home run hitting contest? Would Americans endure a Super Bowl that was decided by a punt, pass and kick completion? Could there be anything more un-American than concluding the seventh game of the NBA championship with a 3-point shooting contest or a slam dunk contest?

Even tennis is more manly than soccer. In 2010, John Isner and Nicholas Mahut played 11 hours and 5 minutes of tennis, spread over three days before Isner finally overcame Mahut, 70-68 in the final set.

In real sports, winners are determined on the field of play.

Americans love to drive and roundabouts make driving a misery. Traffic circles are no more American than soccer.

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