



Jamaica Roundabout Wins Two More Awards!

The controversial, yet successful interchange improvement of Jamaica Avenue at Highway 61 in Cottage Grove has won its fifth award since completion in October 2007! The latest award has been presented by the Finance and Commerce publication and is noted as one of the 25 Top Projects for 2007 in their debut awards program. Selections for the award were based on innovative construction techniques, creativity in design and overall complexity. An award notification has also been received from the American Concrete Pavement Association, which granted this project its highest (Gold) award in the Urban Arterials and Collectors category (the only Gold award winner from Minnesota).

Prior awards granted to this project include the Grand Award by the American Council of Engineering Companies of Minnesota and the Minnesota Society of Professional Engineers highest engineering award. The project also received a Merit Award from the Concrete Paving Association of Minnesota. Each of these awards provides increased regional, statewide, and national awareness of Cottage Grove and this business area.

This Jamaica Avenue/Highway 61 improvement was initially contemplated to correct a traffic and safety hazard most directly associated with the highway off ramps. Traffic back-ups on the ramps were coming increasingly closer to the main line highway through lanes. The new interchange moves traffic efficiently through the area reducing traffic congestion, safety concerns and undoubtedly frustration levels of commuters, shoppers, truckers and other industrial traffic. In fact, in a survey completed three months after project completion 95% of respondents had used the roundabout and 67% of those found it easy to use.

Prior to the traffic improvements created by this project some legs of the intersection were failing to effectively handle the traffic. After the improvement all legs of the roundabouts have a service level "A" rating through projected 2027 traffic volumes which allows for build out of all property within the City's industrial park and nearby commercial properties.

There are tertiary benefits of this improvement as well. The pre-existing condition did not include any pedestrian connection between business activity on the two sides of the highway. The new improvement has walkways on both sides of Jamaica Avenue providing easy access between East and West Point Douglas Roads. Storm drainage improvements were installed as was a significant improvement in lighting of the area. With a goal of future maintenance reduction the paved surfaces are predominantly concrete with an expectation of much longer pavement life for this heavily trafficked area. Finally, the project was designed to provide not only traffic calming plantings and structures but also a welcoming gateway “front door” for both commercial and industrial customers, vendors, and employees. Enhancements such as installed in this project have been shown to result in speed reduction, fewer accidents, and improved air quality. Finally, a sense of place beyond “just a highway interchange” greets visitors and shoppers to this important business district.