



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

AGENDA SECTION	WORK SESSION
MEETING DATE	APRIL 5, 2021

ITEM:	MNDOT PEL STUDY	
DEPARTMENT:	Public Works	BY/DATE: Kevin Hansen/April 1, 2021
CITY STRATEGY: <i>(please indicate areas that apply by adding a bold "X" in front of the selected text below)</i>		
X_Safe Community		_Diverse, Welcoming "Small-Town" Feel
_Economic Strength		_Excellent Housing/Neighborhoods
_Equity and Affordability		X_Strong Infrastructure/Public Services
_Opportunities for Play and Learning		_Engaged, Multi-Generational, Multi-Cultural Population

BACKGROUND: The City of Columbia Heights has been participating in MnDOT's PEL study along TH 47 and TH 65 for the past year. A PEL study looks at current transportation conditions and problems, following a federally established process, and presents the likely future needs for the next 20 or more years, based on traffic data, existing conditions and community input.

A PEL study is a relatively new tool for MnDOT. It emphasizes community engagement and collaboration early in transportation planning. This will allow MnDOT to better understand community needs before specific transportation projects are designed and built. The first phase of a PEL study will not be looking at specific improvements, but will present long- term vision of what types of improvements are needed most and where they should be located.

The intent of the PEL Study is improved safety, focusing on pedestrians. Previous studies along these segments of University and Central Avenues, including MnDOT's 2018 Road Safety Audit and the Minneapolis 2019 Vision Zero Plan, have highlighted safety and accessibility needs for bicyclists and pedestrians. The rates of fatal and severe crashes here are above the statewide average. There are more accidents than average on some segments of Hwy 47 and Hwy 65, and the accidents that involve pedestrians and bicyclists are far more likely to result in death or serious injuries. There have been two more pedestrian fatalities on Central Avenue, in June and August 2020.

The PEL study will produce a "road map" of where improvements are needed most—based on community input and data analysis. The study will not design specific construction projects, but will lay the groundwork that is necessary to help MnDOT and local partners prioritize projects and obtain funds for them. The first phase of the PEL study is intended to be completed this spring, and MnDOT has indicated they will be moving to the second phase this fall following an RFP process and consultant selection.

The City of Columbia Heights has been approached by MnDOT regarding the installation of "demonstration projects' along Central Avenue. As proposed through the PEL Study, these include:

- 37th – Continue to look at potential demonstration options with upcoming project in 2023.
- 39th – Keep intersection median open. Consider bump outs or center median refuge.

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- Gould – ¾ intersection, median extension/refuge, bump out on the west curb of SB TH65
 - 40th – Delineators only – bump outs on all 4 corners with left turn hardening and potential
 - LPI42nd/43rd – ¾ intersection or full closure using delineators (concrete barriers?)
 - 44th - Bump outs on all 4 corners with left turn hardening
 - 45th – Left turn hardening, median extensions/refuge
 - 47th - Consider bump outs or center median refuge
 - 50th – Hardened center line/median extensions and proposed LPI

MnDOT's North Area Engineer, Tony Wotzka, will attend the meeting (via Zoom) to review the PEL study, the 2021 demonstration projects in Columbia Heights, and next steps moving forward.

ATTACHMENT(S):