



SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING - HWY 65 / CENTRAL AVENUE

**City Hall—Council Chambers, 3989 Central Ave NE
Tuesday, June 16, 2026
6:00 PM**

Mayor
Amada Márquez Simula
Councilmembers
Connie Buesgens
Rachel James
Justice Spriggs
Laurel Deneen
City Manager
Aaron Chirpich

MINUTES

WELCOME/CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Márquez Simula at 6:10 pm.

Present: Mayor Márquez Simula, Councilmember Deneen, Councilmember Buesgens, Councilmember James, Councilmember Spriggs

Also Present: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager; Sara Ion, City Clerk; Rochelle Widmer, Director of Engineering and Facilities; Chris Bower, MNDOT; Matt Thibert, MNDOT

PRESENTATION

Central Ave Reconstruction Municipal Consent Public Hearing Agenda and MnDOT Presentation.

Presenting Item: Rochelle Widmer, City Engineer, and Chris Bower, MnDOT North Metro Engineer

Chris Bower from the Minnesota Department of Transportation presented the preferred layout for the Central Ave. Trunk Hwy. 65 reconstruction, detailing safety improvements, multimodal enhancements, and the timeline. The project aims to reconstruct a two-mile stretch of Central Ave. from 37th Ave. to 53rd Ave., addressing safety concerns, improving pavement conditions, upgrading pedestrian crossings, sidewalks, pathways, managing speeds, expanding multimodal options, and enhancing transit access for residents and commuters.

Bower Additionally shared crash statistics, highlighting that Central Ave. from 40th to 47th Ave. has the second highest rate of fatal and serious injury crashes in Minnesota, with pedestrian crossing distances being a contributing factor. The proposed designs include lane reductions, a northbound bus lane, access alterations at six intersections, addition of roundabouts (single and multi-lane), and acquisition of permanent right of ways, with property owners already contacted regarding these changes.

The municipal consent process requires the public hearing occurring today and a City Council vote within 90 days, with options to approve, approve with conditions, deny, or do nothing (default approval). Final design will proceed in 2027, and construction is scheduled to begin in 2028, likely to span three years. Included in the process are stormwater treatment goals that also necessitate acquiring city and private property to create infiltration boulevards that reduce phosphorus runoff. Affected property owners will be engaged to find mutually beneficial solutions.

PUBLIC HEARING

Central Ave Reconstruction Municipal Consent Public Hearing.

Motion by Councilmember James, seconded by Councilmember Buesgens, to open the public hearing on

MnDOT's Central Avenue reconstruction project. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

Mayor Márquez Simula opened the Public Hearing.

Residents and business owners voiced concerns about traffic congestion, business and economic impacts, semi/ large vehicle /emergency vehicle access, roundabout education and safety. Residents inquired about comparative traffic studies and business assessments inquiring whether sufficient research and modeling have been conducted to predict real-world outcomes. Additional concerns regarding construction staging and limiting the length of road closures was expressed.

Residents and business owners also expressed support for safety and multimodal improvement focusing on pedestrian, bicyclist, and transit safety, emphasizing the need for safer sidewalks, mixed-use paths, and a community-oriented Main Street environment.

Mayor Márquez Simula and City Manager Chirpich again reviewed the Municipal Consent timeline and process indicating that there would be additional work sessions and council meetings that residents could attend to stay informed regarding the status of the project and updates and opportunities for additional public input. MnDOT will be providing information and answers to the questions posed during the public hearing.

Motion by Councilmember Buesgens, seconded by Councilmember Spriggs, to close the public hearing on MnDOT's Central Avenue reconstruction project. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Deneen, seconded by Councilmember James, to adjourn. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary