



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

AGENDA SECTION	WORK SESSION
MEETING DATE	JUNE 1, 2026

ITEM:	Municipal Consent for MnDOT Central Avenue Reconstruction Project. (30 Minutes)							
<i>Presenting Item: Rochelle Widmer, Director of Engineering and Facilities</i>								
DEPARTMENT: Engineering	BY/DATE: Rochelle Widmer / May 27, 2026							
<p>CORE CITY STRATEGIES: <i>(please indicate areas that apply by adding an "X" in front of the selected text below)</i></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">_Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity</td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;">_Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">_High Quality Public Spaces</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">_Resilient and Prosperous Economy</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px;">X Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone</td> <td style="padding: 5px;">_Inclusive and Connected Community</td> </tr> </table>			_Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity	_Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking	_High Quality Public Spaces	_Resilient and Prosperous Economy	X Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone	_Inclusive and Connected Community
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BACKGROUND

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has presented the preferred layout for Central Avenue (TH 65) from 37th to 53rd Avenues. MnDOT has reviewed the layout with the Council at the April, May, June, and December 2025 Work Sessions and the January and April 2026 Work Sessions.

The project includes reconstruction of the 2-mile stretch of Central Ave (TH 65) between 37th Ave and 53rd Ave. This project will look to address safety concerns through the corridor while enhancing the connectivity and quality of life for the residents that live along and use the corridor. The project will benefit all travelers by reconstructing the road, upgrading pedestrian crossings, improving sidewalks and pathways, managing speed, expanding multimodal options, and improving transit access.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT STATUS

On April 17, 2026, MnDOT submitted the proposed layout for Central Avenue for Municipal Consent. The submittal from MnDOT provided the following information to City staff:

- Submittal letter
- Example resolution
- Good faith cost estimate
- Engagement summary of MnDOT’s outreach efforts since 2020
- Relevant statutes around Municipal Consent
- Proposed layout

Municipal Consent by the City Council is required on the Central Avenue Reconstruction project since it:

- Alters access by removing the connection of Central Avenue and Reservoir Boulevard and several other locations.
- Reduces highway traffic capacity by removing a general purpose through lane in each direction north of 39th St. to a point approximately 450 feet south of the intersection with 49th Avenue.

- Requires acquisition of permanent right-of-way, including potential acquisition of parcels currently owned by the City of Columbia Heights. MnDOT also plans partial acquisition of several additional parcels to acquire small amounts of permanent right-of-way from other parcels.

Approval or disapproval of the final layout is by resolution of the City Council. However, if the City neither approves nor disapproves the final layout within 90 days of the public hearing, the layout is deemed approved (per MN Statute 161.164).

The deadlines (per MN Statute 161.164) for the City's responsibilities regarding Municipal Consent of the proposed layout are as follows:

- Within 15 days of receiving the final layout, schedule a public hearing (by May 5, 2026).
- Within 60 days of receiving the final layout, conduct the public hearing (by June 16, 2026).
- Provide at least 30 days' notice of the public hearing.
- Within 90 days of the public hearing, approve or disapprove the layout by resolution (by **September 14, 2026**).

MnDOT will attend the public hearing to present the final layout to the public and answer questions, as required by statute. As noted above, the deadline for the City Council vote on Municipal Consent is September 14, 2026.

MnDOT has identified several key design subjects that members of the public have previously voiced concerns over. This list of concerns includes:

- Number of Lanes
 - MnDOT has proposed fewer lanes on Central Ave to make the corridor safer and help calm traffic. The primary goal of this project is to improve safety. Reducing lanes will help accomplish that while also considering tradeoffs with this shift.
 - To discuss:
 - Some traffic will shift to University Ave, which MnDOT is planning for. This will result in more east-west traffic but likely not enough to create new safety concerns.
 - Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) will be stopping in-lane which will cause on average a 7 second delay in traffic every time a bus stops. There will be bus pull-outs at some locations to account for this.
 - If maintenance or an incident occurred with one single driving lane in each direction, the entire road would need to shut down with a detour in at least one direction. MnDOT is preparing a Central Ave/University Ave lane closure plan for these occasions.
- Roundabouts vs Traffic Signals
 - Single lane roundabouts reduce all types of crashes and will function better than traffic signals.
 - Items to consider with multilane roundabouts:
 - They can prevent fatal/serious injury crashes but can lead to an increase in property damage (fender bender) crashes relative to a signal.
 - Multilane roundabouts can present some challenges to safe and accessible pedestrian and bicycle crossings.
- Bicycle Facilities
 - MnDOT supports and will fund construction of bicycle facilities along Central Ave but will not maintain bike facilities. This facility is currently shown as a shared use path.
- Reservoir Blvd

- MnDOT has recommended full closure of the Central Ave access from Reservoir Blvd.
- 42nd Ave
 - MnDOT has recommended a conversion to right-in right-out from the existing traffic signal at 42nd Ave. Local businesses have shared concerns with this change. Currently, the intersection does not have the traffic volumes to support a signal.

City staff from multiple departments have been working with MnDOT to obtain sufficient information on future maintenance requirements for the City. These efforts specifically pertain to the MnDOT's proposed stormwater infrastructure. As we are currently in the layout phase, MnDOT does not have a detailed design covering the specifics of the proposed infrastructure. More details will be provided later in the design process once the necessary testing and research have been completed by MnDOT. To leverage the City's authority on these matters, the City can adopt a separate Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with MnDOT to document commitments not clearly defined in the layout. City Council would vote on each MOU at the same time as the Municipal Consent vote.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Requested Council Action/ Discussion Topics / Key Questions
<i>(Briefly state the specific action staff is requesting of the City Council, if any. For example: provide direction, discuss options, or review information.)</i>
Staff requests that Council have a brief discussion regarding MnDOT's Municipal Consent submittal for the Central Avenue Reconstruction project.

ATTACHMENT(S)

MnDOT Submittal Letter
 MnDOT Good Faith Cost Estimate
 MnDOT Example Resolution for Municipal Consent
 MnDOT Timelapse Engagement Summary
 MnDOT Proposed Layout
 Relevant MN State Statutes