



Central Avenue Improvements Columbia Heights Municipal Consent Public Hearing Questions

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Metro District

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Q1. How many pedestrian/vehicle crashes have occurred crossing against the light on Central and the reason for crash?

From 2015 to 2022 in Columbia Heights, there were 12 serious or fatal pedestrian crashes. Of these, 2 were listed in the crash report as "pedestrian crossing against the signal".

There have been several serious/fatal crashes since 2022 involving pedestrians. We don't immediately have a breakdown of how many of those involved pedestrians crossing against the signal.

Q2. How will these changes affect commute times?

Traffic modeling shows that average travel time from 53rd Avenue through 37th Avenue are projected to increase approximately 40-45 seconds in the peak direction in the peak hour for general traffic over the two-mile segment (southbound in the morning peak hour, northbound in the evening peak hour). Non-peak direction travel is projected to experience only a 5-15 second increase in travel time. Transit travel times in this same segment are projected to decrease 30 to 90 seconds, along with expected improvements to reliability for buses.

Q3. Do you have a case study of a similar highway of this magnitude that has similar traffic and reduces lanes to compare to?

Central Avenue carries 18,000 to 22,000 cars per day between 37th and 49th Ave, based on 2025 data. Other examples of roads in Minnesota that have had lane reductions with similar volumes include:

- Maryland Ave in Saint Paul (21,000-23,000 cars/day) - <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/trafficing/safety/road-diet-stpaul.html>
- Broadway Street NE in Minneapolis (19,000-24,000 cars per day)
- East Hennepin Avenue (35W to 280) in Minneapolis (20,000 cars per day)

Q4. Does MnDOT know if the roundabout elevations will be a lower grade or higher grade elevation.

The details of this will be worked out in final design.

Q5. How much traffic can the new roadway design with roundabouts accommodate?

Roundabouts are designed to match traffic demand. Single-lane approaches can accommodate up to 1,400 vehicles per hour, while two-lane approaches can accommodate up to 2,300 vehicles per hour.

Traffic volumes increase as you travel north on Central Avenue. At 46½ Avenue and 47th Avenue, current traffic volumes fit within the capacity of a single-lane roundabout (1,093 vehicles/hour at 47th Avenue in 2024), so single-lane roundabouts are proposed.

At 49th, 51st, and 53rd Avenues, traffic volumes are higher, reaching 1,322 vehicles/hour at 53rd Avenue in 2024. To accommodate existing traffic and provide room for future growth, MnDOT is proposing two-lane roundabout approaches on Central Avenue at these intersections.

Q6. Can the roadway design be altered, or is it a final plan?

This is the final preliminary design. However, the City can place conditions on their approval.

Q7. Is there going to be property owner assessments along Central Avenue to cover local cost share?

The City will not be assessing property owners to cover the local cost share.

Q8. What is the square footage of the 37th Avenue intersection that has the original bricks from the 1900's?

MnDOT Materials reviewed old soil borings and construction plans and there isn't a significant amount of brick left in the 37th Avenue intersection since it may have been removed with previous work. Ground penetrating radar did find evidence of rails in the intersection in 2024 that will be removed with this project.

Q9. How will EMS navigate the corridor with reduced lanes, traffic, bus lanes, and roundabouts?

Where there is a single lane, MnDOT will provide a mountable median so an emergency vehicle can move around a stopped or disabled vehicle.

The traffic signals on Central Avenue will be equipped with "Emergency Vehicle Pre-Emption" that will change the lights to green when an emergency vehicle is coming. This will help keep vehicles moving during rush hour.

Bus lanes and turn lanes will provide additional room for vehicles to pull over for emergency vehicles to pass in single lane areas.

Q10. How much space is going to be dedicated to pedestrians versus bicyclists on the shared paths, and will it be delineated in a clear, easy to understand way?

MnDOT's proposed layout features a shared use path on both sides of Central Avenue. This is a shared space for both bicycles and pedestrians. Typically, a shared use path does not separately delineate bicycle space and pedestrian space. Signs such as "bicycles yield to pedestrians" or even different colored pavements can be used to help reinforce shared spaces versus pedestrian spaces and help assign modal priority. These details have yet to be determined.

Q11. How long will the timing be for the light be at 52nd Avenue?

The signal will be triggered when a sensor detects cars waiting to turn. With roundabouts in the corridor, it will likely operate free most of the day, with relatively low maximum phase times of around 30–60 seconds. With so many roadway changes, this would need to be calibrated after construction.

Q12. How will the project ensure businesses that currently have parking continue to have parking?

MnDOT is not proposing major changes to the on-street parking along Central Avenue. Generally, where parking exists today, parking will be maintained.

At intersection corners, parking will be restricted immediately adjacent to the intersection to maintain clear sight lines at the intersection. This will result in the removal of a small number of parking spaces immediately at the intersections, but the balance of parking on the block will be maintained.

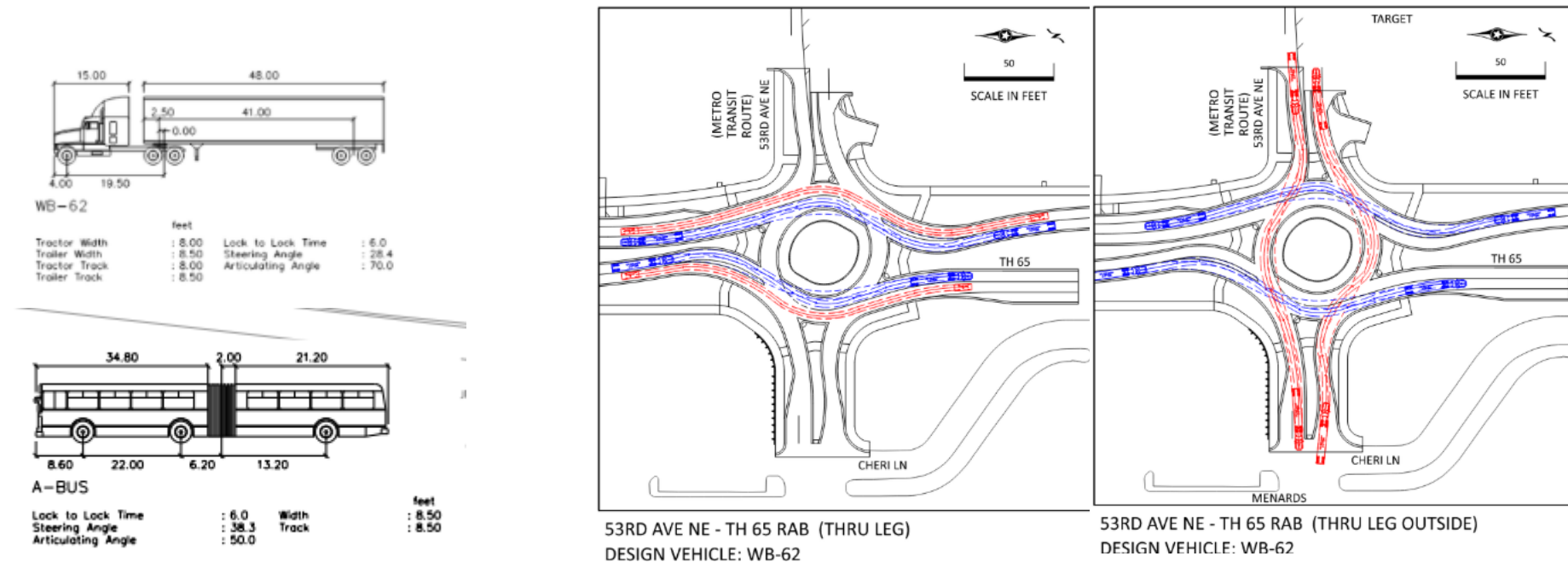
Q13. How will the possible new apartments or other new development affect traffic and taxes on Central?

Traffic forecast data was developed for several future year (2040) scenarios using the Metropolitan Council's Activity Based Model. This model uses population and employment projections across the region and is calibrated to existing traffic volumes and data. This traffic data was used in comparing and evaluating different roadway configurations along with supplemental analyses for several larger proposed developments.

Development near 53rd, would potentially increase volumes on the eastbound leg of the intersection by 15-20%. The proposed roundabout has the capacity to accommodate this traffic and could be evaluated in the future for potential modifications. Development near 43rd, would need a signal and is being considered as part of the project.

Q14. Can buses and semis make it through the roundabouts?

Yes, the proposed layout was developed using a WB-62 vehicle which is a standard interstate semitrailer that has a 53 foot trailer and 62.5' between the wheelbase which also accommodate the buses.



Q15. Are we eliminating driving lanes for a bus lane?

No, MnDOT is not proposing to remove driving lanes to create a bus lane.

MnDOT is proposing to remove a general purpose lane south of 49th Avenue to improve safety. Lane reductions (road diets) are a proven safety measure, reducing crashes by 19% to 47%, based on nationwide studies.

After removing a general purpose lane to improve safety, there is some surplus roadway space available that is not otherwise being used. MnDOT is proposing in partnership with Metro Transit to use some of that surplus space for a bus lane, but this is incidental to the safety improvement.

Q16. How will the project impact our city parade with only one lane of traffic?

There are currently no parade routes that travel along or intersect with Central Avenue in Columbia Heights.

Q17. What happens if someone cuts off a bus to get ahead of them, within the roundabout?

Changing lanes in a roundabout to get ahead of a bus is an unsafe maneuver and in violation of Minnesota Statutes. MnDOT will do additional education and outreach to try and inform the public prior to construction, but if this happens post-construction it may lead to a traffic citation.

Q18. Why do buses need to stop in the lane?

Buses stop in-lane to provide faster, more convenient, and more comfortable service for riders. Stopping in-lane means that buses do not have to merge in and out of traffic, improving traffic operations for all road users, and providing a smoother ride for passengers, as buses can travel in a straight line rather than weaving in and out of the lane. With offboard fare payment, all-door boarding, and near-level boarding, buses typically only need to stop for a few seconds to serve each station.

Additionally, stopping in-lane avoids the need for adding a bus pull-out bay, leaving more space for other uses such as sidewalk seating, bike lanes, or additional parking.

Q19. How will the project impact the local street network?

The local street network is not expected to see a noticeable increase in traffic volume. Traffic modeling shows that Central Avenue will continue to have adequate capacity to support projected demand so traffic diversion to the local street network is not expected.

In general, there are some slight increases to average delays in the morning and evening peak hours for minor street movements (approximately 5-10 seconds per vehicle) along Central Avenue in the segments where lane reductions are proposed. North of 45th Avenue, where several roundabouts are proposed, minor street approaches are projected to experience a decrease in delay when turning on to Central Avenue, due to the nature of roundabouts more equally distributing delay across all approaches of the intersection. The existing traffic signals have long cycle times, which contribute to long wait times for minor street movement today. Where access is proposed to be reduced and drivers are rerouted to a nearby roundabout, an additional analysis found that total travel times (including both intersection delays and additional travel time) are approximately the same time spent waiting at traffic signals.

Q20. How many cars will back up at 52nd on the west side from the light and how long will they have to wait?

The signal will be triggered when a sensor detects cars waiting to turn. With roundabouts in the corridor, it will likely operate free most of the day, with relatively low maximum phase times of around 30–60 seconds. With so many layout changes a lot of this would be calibrated after construction.

Q21. Can we keep existing on street parking at businesses?

MnDOT is not proposing major changes to the on-street parking along Central Avenue. Generally, where parking exists today, parking will be maintained.

At intersection corners, parking will be restricted immediately adjacent to the intersection to maintain clear sight lines at the intersection. This will result in the removal of a small number of parking spaces immediately at intersections, but the balance of parking on the block will be maintained.

Q22. Is there enough space to navigate around accidents?

Where there is a single lane and not enough room to get around a disabled vehicle, MnDOT will provide a mountable curb in the median so a vehicle can still move around a stopped or disabled vehicle. These details will be refined in the final design phase of the project.

MnDOT will have pre-arranged detours if there is a serious crash. An alternate route will be designated using Highway 47 (University Ave).

Q23. How do articulating busses navigate around the roundabouts?

Articulated buses have three axles: two on the front portion of the bus and one at the rear, after the articulation. Because the third axle moves independently from the front of the bus, the rear wheels and rear half of the bus track inward during turns. When traveling through a roundabout or other curve, this means the rear half of the bus can extend into the adjacent lane. If motorists are not expecting this, they may be at risk of a sideswipe crash if they're traveling next to the bus through the roundabout. For this reason, Metro Transit operators are trained to split the lanes when traveling through a roundabout to minimize the risk for this type of incident. That said, Metro Transit plans to use 40' buses for the F Line, so articulated buses will not be using the corridor as frequently.

Q24. What are the predicted ridership numbers for the F Line?

The Route 10 averaged 5,300 weekday riders as of fall 2025. Ridership on Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (ABRT) routes typically increases by 20-50% compared to the predecessor route.

Q25. Why do buses stop at intersections?

Buses stop at intersections to encourage safe pedestrian crossings to access stations. When a bus stop is located farther away from an intersection/crosswalk, people are more likely to cross the road unsafely and illegally to catch a bus.

Q26. Are motorcycles permitted between lanes in multi-lane roundabouts?

Per Minnesota Statute 169.974, lane splitting is not allowed at the approach, drive-through, or exit of a roundabout.

Q27. Why are signals needed at 50th and 52nd for cars only turning right?

The primary reason that traffic signals are proposed at 50th and 52nd Avenue is to maintain a signal-controlled pedestrian crossing of Central Avenue. MnDOT doesn't typically install pedestrian-only traffic signals, but in this instance, it's important to provide a signalized crossing opportunity for pedestrians who are blind or low vision and may not feel comfortable crossing at the roundabout at 51st or 53rd.

If MnDOT installs a traffic signal for pedestrian crossings, the added cost to signalize the right turns is minimal. It also adds the ability to display a red turn arrow on 50th & 52nd when a pedestrian is crossing Central Avenue to minimize conflicts between right-turning vehicles and pedestrians.

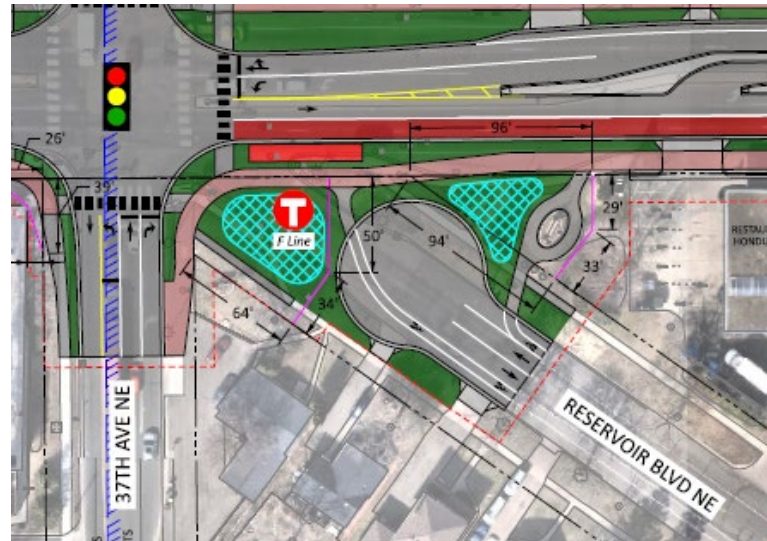
MnDOT traffic modeling suggests the signal is not needed for right-turning motor vehicles. We would not propose constructing a signal here for that purpose alone.

Q28. Are all the stormwater treatment sites shown on the layout needed?

At this stage of design, all the stormwater sites shown on the municipal consent layout are needed. Currently the sites shown do not achieve the stormwater treatment requirements. However, a partnership for a potential regional stormwater treatment facility could help address some or all the treatment needs and reduce the number of other stormwater treatment sites needed.

Q29. Can the new 37th/Reservoir cul-de-sac area be used for stormwater treatment?

The proposed municipal consent layout currently shows this area as a potential stormwater treatment area. Due to existing utilities and potential federal protected park impacts, this may change the ability to use this area effectively.



Q30. What type of stormwater treatment is being considered?

MnDOT is required to reduce phosphorus runoff. Each of the stormwater treatment facilities displayed on the layout are intended to be surface level infiltration or filtration types. Each facility will contain an overflow device 18 inches above the bottom of the basin. No underground facilities are currently shown but may be needed in the right of way to meet requirements.

Q31. Will any of the parking become metered?

The City of Columbia Heights does not currently have any metered parking and has no plans of implementing metered parking along Central Avenue in the future.

Q32. Can a car safely pull over in the one lane areas if they break down?

There will not be a shoulder or a designated spot for vehicles with mechanical issues to stop along most of Central Avenue. If a car is experiencing mechanical issues, they should pull off on a side street or into a parking space.

If a car has an unforeseen mechanical issue and is blocking the single travel lane, in most instances there will be space for other vehicles to get around, by traveling briefly in a turn lane or bus-only lane. MnDOT will make the medians mountable so people can get around a disabled vehicle if needed.

Q33. Did MnDOT consider the future development (ex: new 500-unit apartments) into the layout design?

Traffic forecast data was developed for several future year (2040) scenarios using the Metropolitan Council's Activity Based Model. This model uses population and employment projections across the region and is calibrated to existing traffic volumes and data. This traffic data was used in comparing and evaluating different roadway configurations along with supplemental analyses for several larger proposed developments.

Development near 53rd, would potentially increase volumes on the eastbound leg of the intersection by 15-20%. The proposed roundabout has the capacity to accommodate this traffic and could be evaluated in the future for potential modifications. Development near 43rd, would need a signal and is being considered as part of the project.



Comments

C1. Request for MnDOT to take the old Medtronic campus and put in a filtration pond there.

Comment noted. MnDOT is working with the City of Columbia Heights and additional partners on potential treatment sites.

C2. Request for more education to the public on how to drive through roundabouts, especially for yielding to pedestrians and bicyclists.

Comment noted. MnDOT is committed to do more outreach and education on roundabouts. MnDOT plans to install overhead signs for roundabouts and improve pedestrian and bicycle crossings.

C3. Request to keep two lanes in each direction through the entire section.

Comment noted. MnDOT's proposed design does not provide two lanes for the entirety of Central Avenue in Columbia Heights.

C4. Concerns with business losses

Business Owner commented that last summer, 45th was shut down for a gas line. There was one lane of traffic in each direction that resulted in a \$30,000 loss of business during that time that created congestion.

Comment noted.

MnDOT is working on developing alternatives for construction staging and will share that with city officials and the public to understand the different options for reconstructing Central Avenue.

C5. Request for the layout approval go to a public ballot in November.

Request noted.

C6. Comment that currently pedestrians don't feel safe.

Comment noted.

C7. Concerns that certain aspects cannot be changed easily later after the project.

Comment noted.

C8. Support for curb separation between the driving lanes and the pedestrians and bicyclists.

Comment noted.

C9. Three concerns referenced at 52nd Ave are safety, business access and the need for additional evaluation before approval.

Comment noted.

C10. Concerns at 52nd and Central that eliminating the stoplight will make a worse congestion issue and have no turning protection for cars.

Current traffic signals have longer cycle times which contribute to the side street delays today. Due to the nature of roundabouts, they more equally distribute the traffic and delays. A supplemental traffic analysis of 52nd found the proposed right in and right outs will be the same or better for both intersection delays and additional travel time.

C11. Requested a consistent lower speed limit from 694 to 37th

Design speed shown in the layout is 30 mph throughout the project. With the reduction of lanes, additions of raised median, roundabouts and curves in between, it is expected that the vehicles will be required to slow down. MnDOT will also perform a speed study after the construction to ascertain the speed limit.

C12. Business owner on 40th requested a curb cut from the alleyway

Request noted.

C13. Comment that construction staging be done in a way that doesn't close Central for a long time to hurt businesses

MnDOT is working on developing alternatives for construction staging and will share that with city officials and the public to understand the different options for reconstructing Central Avenue.

C14. Comment that currently the highway divides the city and people don't like crossing and many avoid driving on it

Comment noted.

C15. Support for reducing lanes to make it feel like less of a freeway

Comment noted.

C16. Comment they support more development to share the tax burden and create a larger tax base.

Comment noted.

C17. Can MnDOT share roundabout success stories and make them accessible for review?

Here are a few locations with success stories;

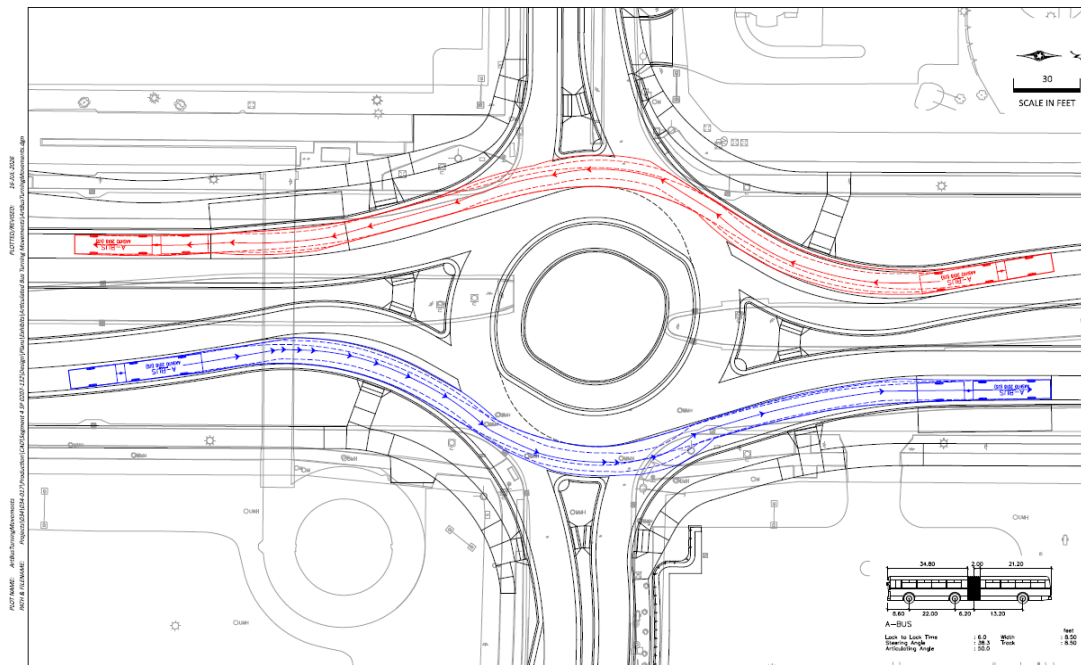
Mankato, Minnesota: https://www.mankatofreepress.com/news/local_news/a-decade-after-debut-of-hwy-22-roundabouts-no-deaths-many-dents-much-less-dissent/article_4b6db02a-64b2-11ef-9b18-df57587a1133.html

Golden, Colorado : <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/learn-safety/reducing-vehicle-speeds-and-crash-severity-through-self-enforcing-roads-city>

Carmel, Indiana: <https://www.iihs.org/research-areas/bibliography/ref/2235>

C18. Referenced a Met Council bus driver has commented they have trouble getting a bus through a roundabout and staying in the lanes.

Metro Transit operations staff have reviewed the roundabout design and concur with the proposed design. Metro Transit successfully navigates multilane roundabouts elsewhere in the Twin Cities.

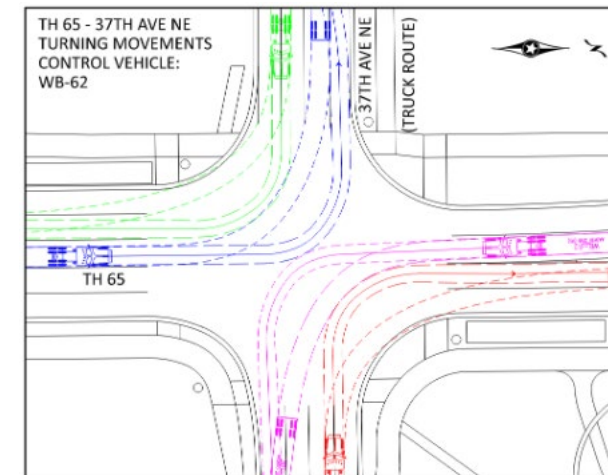
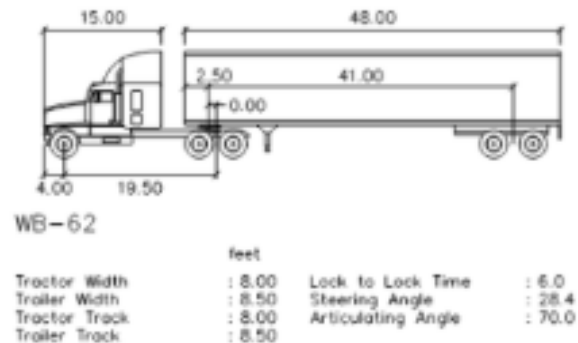


C19. Recommended moving the bus stops away from the intersection.

Buses stop at intersections to encourage safe pedestrian crossings to access stations. When a bus stop is located farther away from an intersection/crosswalk, people are more likely to cross the road unsafely and illegally to catch a bus.

C20. Concerned about trucks being able to get in and out along Central, having the biggest trucking terminal just south of the golf course.

The proposed layout was developed using a WB-62 vehicle which is a standard interstate semitrailer that has a 53-foot trailer and 62.5' between wheelbase. MnDOT will continue to work with businesses on vehicle access needs.



C21. Concerned about congestion and accessing businesses from the intersections.

For most hours of the day, Central Avenue should not experience congestion; generally, congestion will be limited to rush hour when traffic volumes are at their highest.

Highway 47 (University Avenue) provides a faster alternate route for through traffic. It's likely that when Central Avenue is congested, some amount of through traffic will shift to Highway 47 or even I-94 or 35W, leaving Central Avenue for local trips to area businesses. The exact amount of traffic shift to other routes is hard to predict, but during 2022 construction we observed about a 9% shift in traffic to University when Central Avenue was down to a single lane in each direction.

The proposed transit and bicycling improvements will afford other options to get to area businesses without a car. And the narrower width of Central Avenue should make the road safer for pedestrians to cross the street to walk to local businesses.

C22. Recommended more lighting since people are crossing Central Avenue in the middle between intersections in dark clothes.

MnDOT will be installing continuous lighting along Central Avenue and will ensure the proposed lighting meets the recommended lighting levels for urban corridors.

C23. Commented they are considering moving because of this project.

Comment noted.

C24. Concerned about emergency vehicles with having single lanes, especially during rush hour.

Where there is a single lane, MnDOT will provide a mountable median so an emergency vehicle can move around a stopped or disabled vehicle.

The traffic signals on Central Avenue will be equipped with "Emergency Vehicle Pre-Emption" that will change the lights to green when an emergency vehicle is coming. This will help keep vehicles moving during rush hour.

Bus lanes and turn lanes will provide addition room for vehicles to pull over or emergency vehicles to pass in single lane areas.

C25. Recommended two narrower lanes instead of eliminating one of the lanes.

By removing a regular driving lane in each direction MnDOT will be able to significantly reduce pedestrian crossing distances

C26. Recommended frontage roads to connect cross streets for better business access.

As currently proposed, MnDOT's layout does not include the construction of additional frontage roads. MnDOT's traffic analysis suggests that the roadway and intersections as proposed should generally function well.

There's nothing that is proposed that would preclude the construction of additional frontage roads at some later date if needed. In most instances, the proposed roadway is narrower than the existing one, and this leaves room for future frontage road construction if needed.

C27. Recommended transportation planners drive through the intersections proposed and asked if there has been collaboration between Anoka County, which owns the larger cross streets.

Comment noted. MnDOT has been coordinating with Anoka County and will continue to do so.

C28. Objected to camera-based enforcement of bus lanes.

Under state law, Metro Transit cannot enforce bus lanes using cameras. Local police departments are responsible for enforcing moving violations, and traffic and parking services are responsible for enforcing parking violations.

C29. Recommended roundabouts signage be in both English and Spanish.

Based on Federal Standard Highway Signs Publication and the Minnesota Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MN MUTCD), all standard words are in English, and a secondary language cannot be display on sign visible to motor vehicles.

C30. Recommended mid-block lighting near 46th be done now and not wait for the project.

Any lighting that is installed now will be impacted by the project and need to be replaced in 2028. MnDOT understands that there are places on Central Avenue that can benefit from improved lighting today, there are real safety issues at 46th Avenue.

Unfortunately, by the time MnDOT could design the lighting, hire a contractor, and get the lighting installed, it would be late 2026 or early 2027. This would result in two years of service life out of the lighting before it would be replaced again. With a limited budget for safety funding statewide, there are other priority safety investments with a longer service life.

Lighting will be significantly improved in 2028.

C31. Recommended moving bus stops away from intersections since it hard to see around buses.

The design process for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects includes sightline analyses to ensure that platforms are not obstructing drivers' line of sight. In instances where the analysis has shown insufficient sightlines, platform features are shifted away from intersections or otherwise reconfigured to ensure adequate sightlines and driver safety.

C32. Requested additional evaluation before a final decision is made.

MnDOT has been studying proposed changes on Central Avenue since 2019. MnDOT has performed extensive traffic safety, operations analysis, and community outreach. MnDOT isn't planning for additional evaluation but can share additional information upon request and will respond to specific questions or concerns as they arise.

C33. Requested more information on proposed stormwater treatment plans

Request noted. MnDOT is working with the City and other partners and will have additional information after soil borings and further design.

C34. Recommended the wider center medians be used as green space.

Comment noted.

Thank you!

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