



SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE
Monday, October 14, 2024
5:00 PM

Mayor
Amáda Márquez Simula
Councilmembers
Connie Buesgens
Kt Jacobs
Rachel James
Justice Spriggs
City Manager
Aaron Chirpich

AGENDA

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC

*Members of the public who wish to attend may do so in-person, or by using Microsoft Teams Meeting at columbiaheightsmn.gov/joinameeting: ID **240 646 289 119**, Passcode **FpCuX5**. For questions, please contact Administration at 763-706-3610.*

Auxiliary aids or other accommodations for individuals with disabilities are available upon request when the request is made at least 72 hours in advance. Please contact Administration at 763-706-3610 to make arrangements.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

WORK SESSION ITEMS

- 1. Central Avenue Project Discussion with MnDOT. (45 Minutes)**

ADJOURNMENT

Auxiliary aids or other accommodations for individuals with disabilities are available upon request when the request is made at least 72 hours in advance. Please contact Administration at 763-706-3610 to make arrangements.



SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

AGENDA SECTION	SPECIAL WORK SESSION ITEM
MEETING DATE	OCTOBER 14, 2024

ITEM:	Central Avenue Project Discussion with MnDOT.		
DEPARTMENT:	Public Works	BY/DATE:	Assistant City Engineer / October 8, 2024
CORE CITY STRATEGIES: <i>(please indicate areas that apply by adding an "X" in front of the selected text below)</i>			
_Healthy and Safe Community		_Thriving and Vibrant Destination Community	
_Equitable, Diverse, Inclusive, and Friendly		X Strong Infrastructure and Public Services	
_Trusted and Engaged Leadership		_Sustainable	

BACKGROUND:

MnDOT in collaboration with local partners including the City of Columbia Heights, Hilltop, Fridley, Anoka County, and Metro Transit have been evaluating and studying preliminary design concepts for Central Avenue. Chris Bower from MnDOT has been invited to share information with the Council on the latest developments in the Central Avenue design coordination process.

SUMMARY OF CURRENT STATUS:

Various preliminary design concepts for Central Avenue are currently being considered with the goal of selecting a preferred alternative for the corridor by the end of 2024 or early 2025. MnDOT is anticipating to hold a public open house for the Central Avenue project towards the end of October. The final design phase for the project is expected to begin in 2025.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

None – discussion only.

RECOMMENDED MOTION(S):
MOTION: None – discussion only.

ATTACHMENT(S):

Attachments: MnDOT Presentation

Highway 65 Project Update

Christopher Bower | North Area Engineer

10/14/2024

Time	Topic
5 mins	Upcoming engagement
5 mins	Project Goals and Guiding Principles
25 mins	Traffic operations background and info
25 mins	Next steps and questions

- Open house this month!
- Business engagement ongoing, and continuing
- Another round of public engagement late 2024/early 2025

Project Goals and Guiding Principles

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- Improve safety on Central Ave.
 - In Heights/Hilltop we see on average at least one serious/fatal pedestrian crash annually. MnDOT's goal is to reduce this to zero.
 - If congestion gets so bad that large amounts of traffic is diverted to neighborhood streets – creating **new** safety problems on other roads – we've failed to accomplish our safety goal
- Work with partner agencies to realize a holistic roadway design
 - Metro Transit – F Line BRT
 - Columbia Heights – Main Street

This is hard!!!

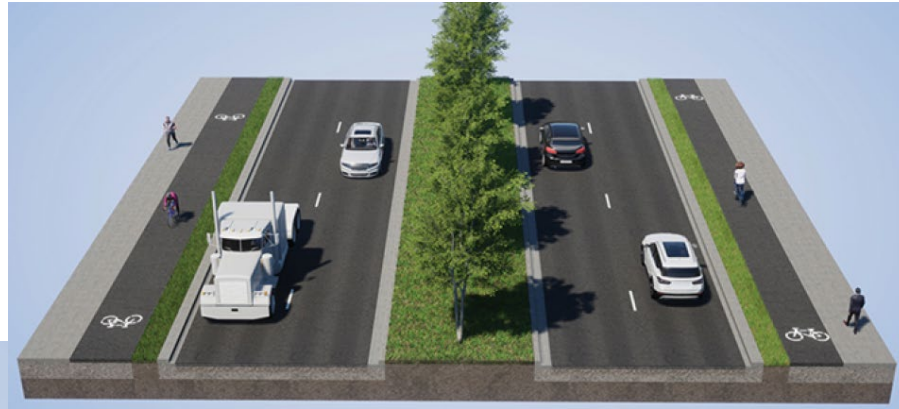
Item 1.



Battle Lake (example of a good walkable urban downtown) – carries 4,300 cars/day.
Central Ave. carries 20,000-30,000 cars/day. **This is a contender for the busiest road diet in the state.**

The PEL was helpful, but....

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- It presented one-size fits all solutions for all of Columbia Heights/Hilltop
- Was so high-level it didn't get into the particulars of each intersection

Highway 169 in Saint Peter – 25,000 cars/day

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Walkable, low-speed Main Street with 4+ lanes requires extra traffic calming elements. This is only possible with support for ongoing maintenance.

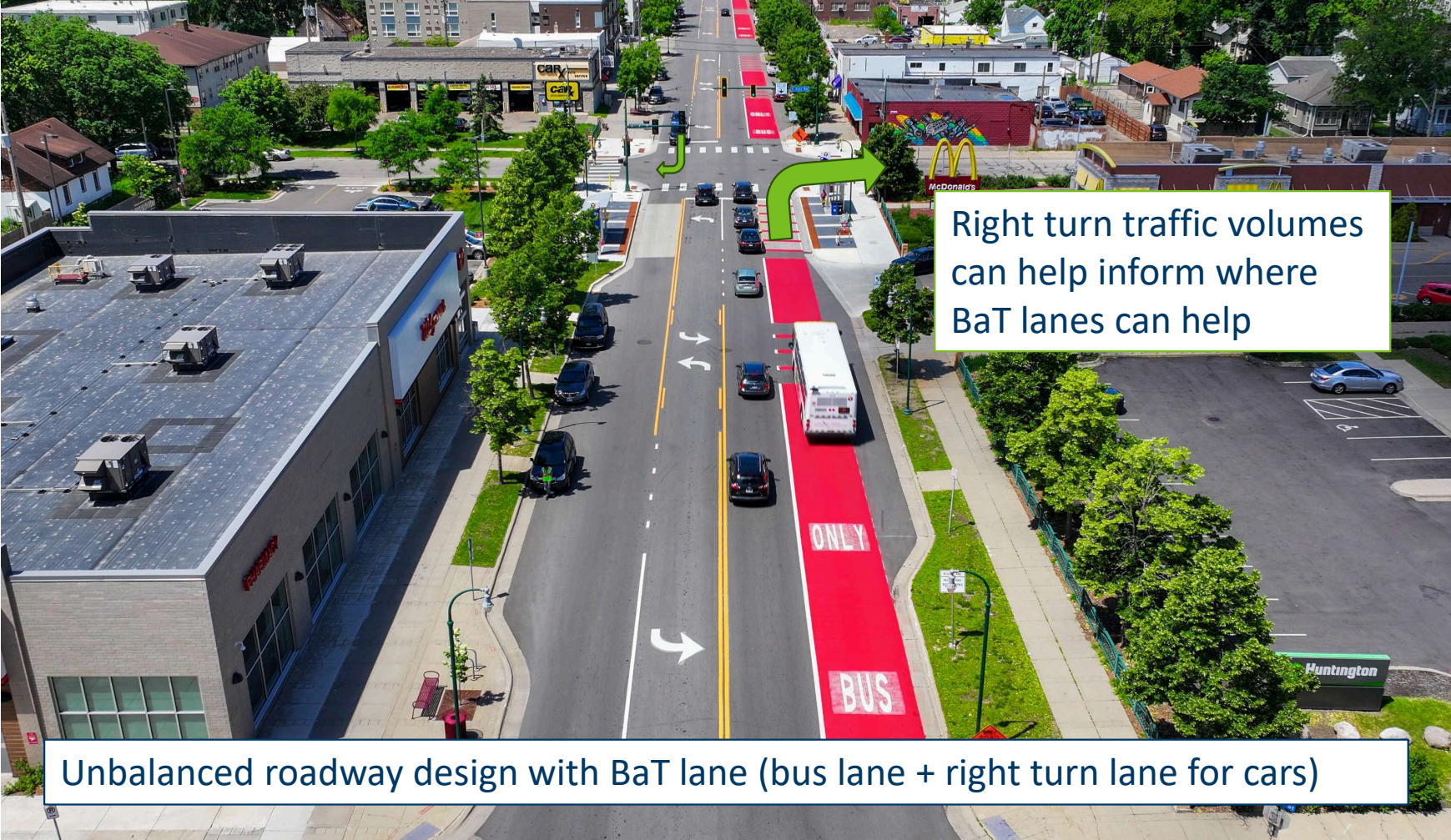
36th Street in Saint Louis Park – 12,000 cars/day

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Lake Street in Minneapolis – 23,000 cars/day

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Right turn traffic volumes can help inform where BaT lanes can help

Unbalanced roadway design with BaT lane (bus lane + right turn lane for cars)

Highway 41 in Chaska – 18,000 cars/day

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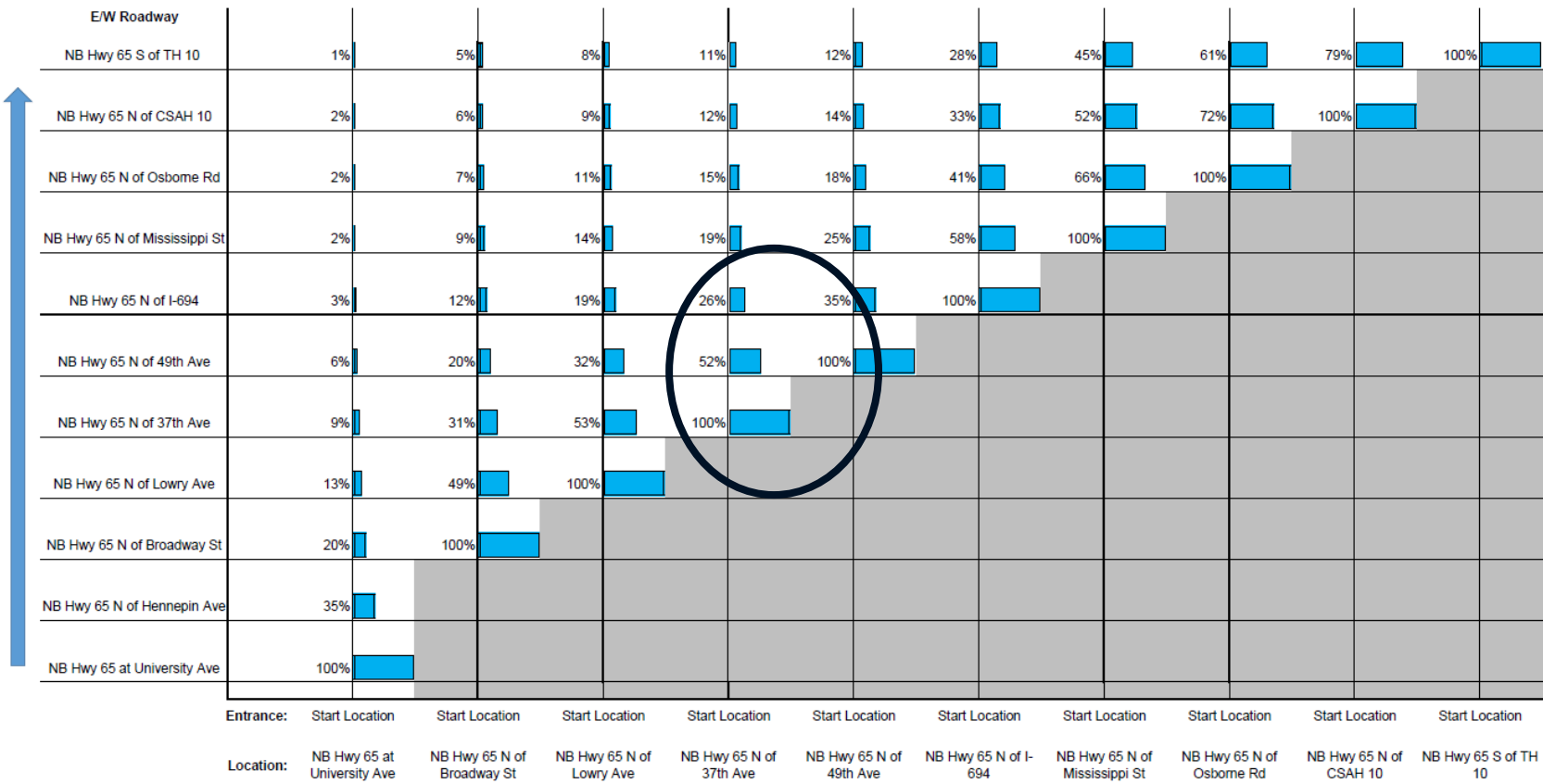


One lane in each direction w/median– turn lanes tailored to intersection-specific needs

Traffic Operations Background and Info

Item 1.

Figure 6.3-5 Hwy 65 Northbound Throughput Travel (Full Corridor Length) - StreetLight 2019 Avg Weekday 24-Hr Data

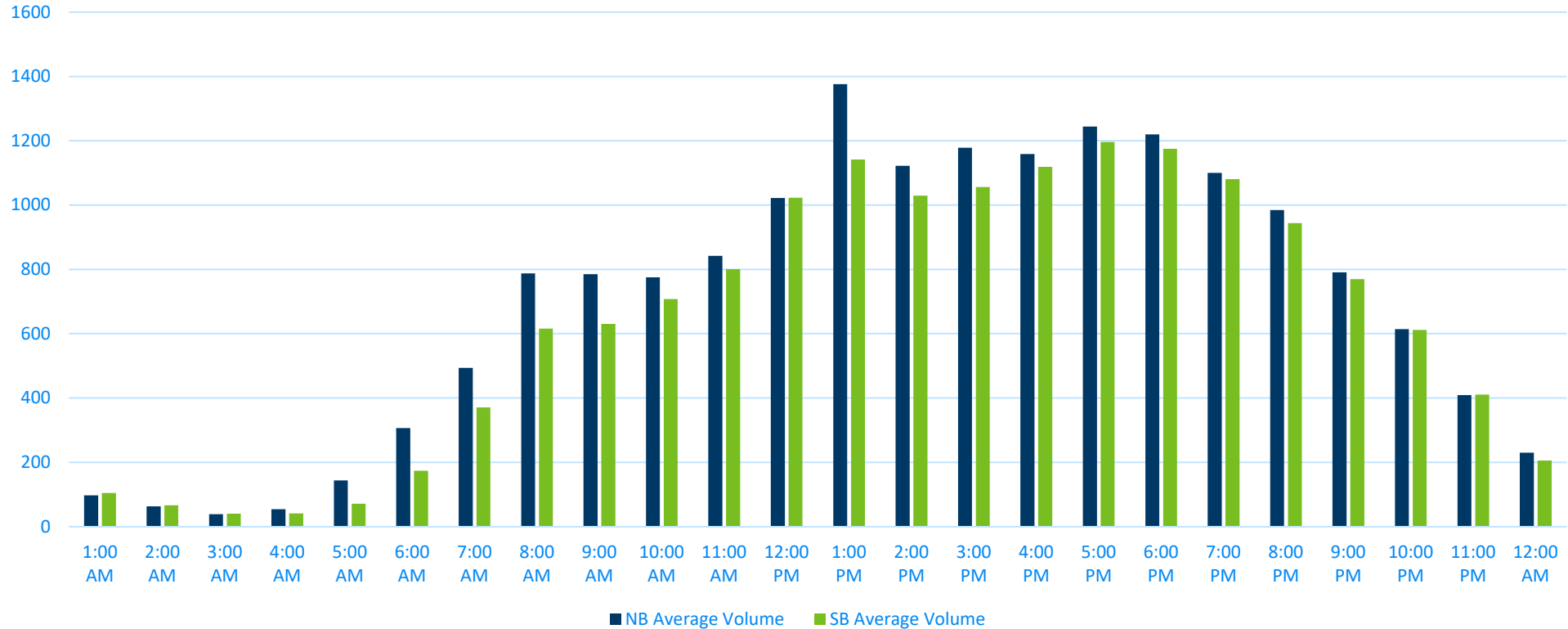


- 76% of traffic on Central Ave. in Columbia Heights is going somewhere in Columbia Heights. This traffic wants/needs good ways to drive to destinations in Heights.
- 24% of traffic on Central Ave. in Heights is just passing through. This traffic might take other routes if they're faster/easier.

Traffic Operations Background and Info

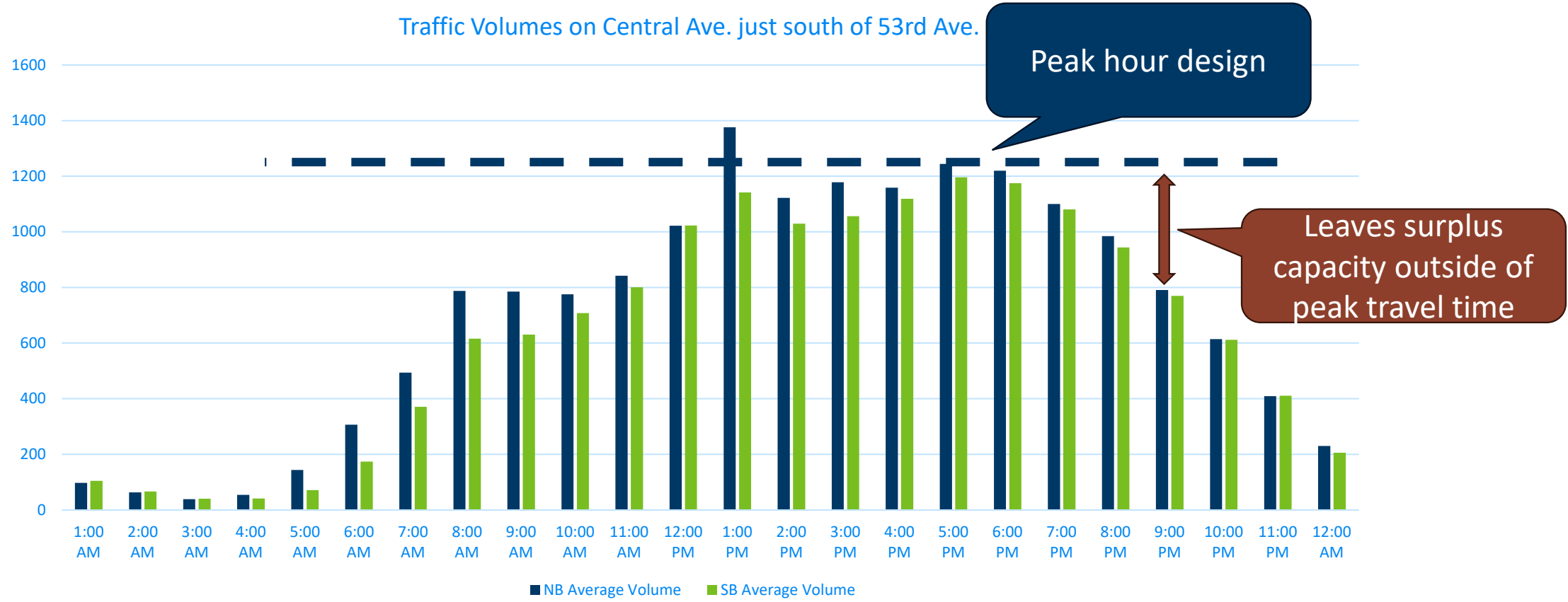
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Traffic Volumes on Central Ave. just south of 53rd Ave.



Traffic Operations Background and Info

Item 1.



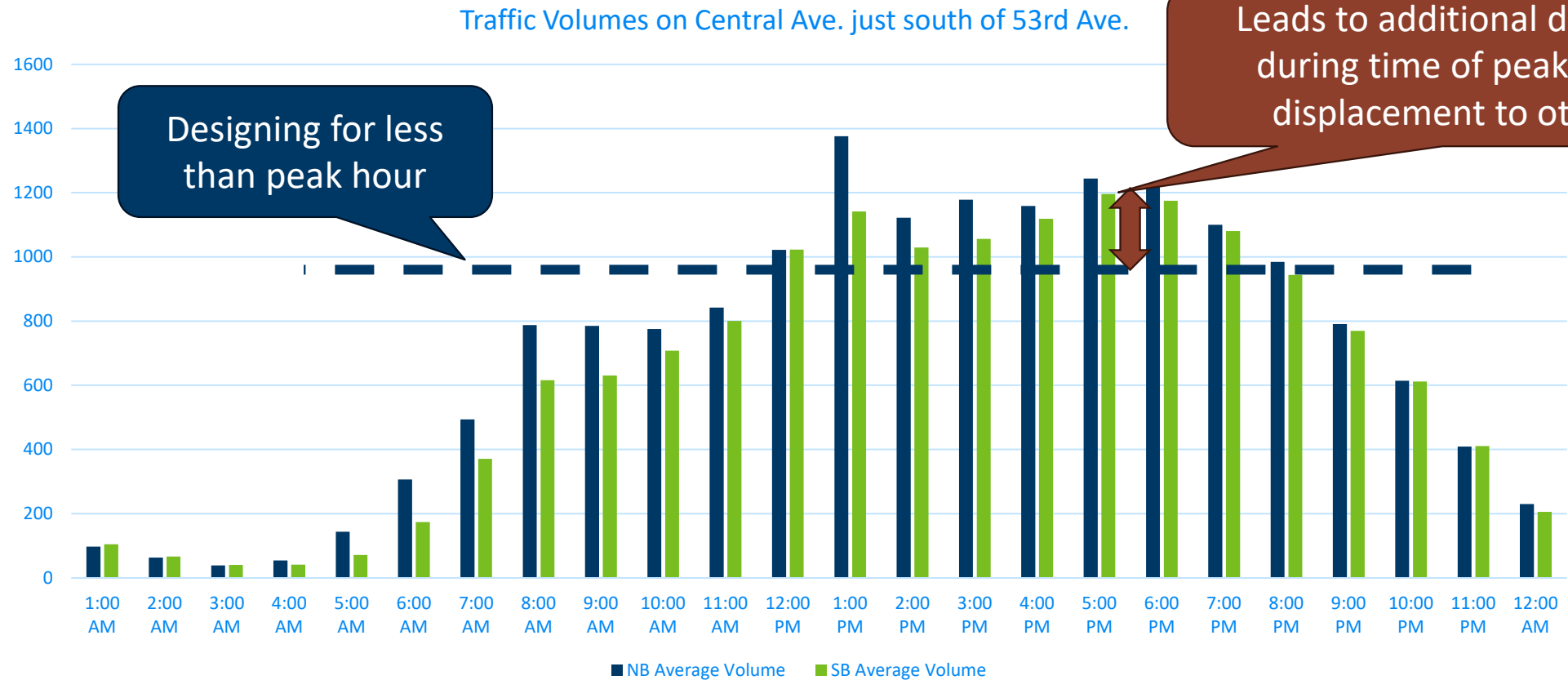
Traffic Operations Background and Info

Item 1.



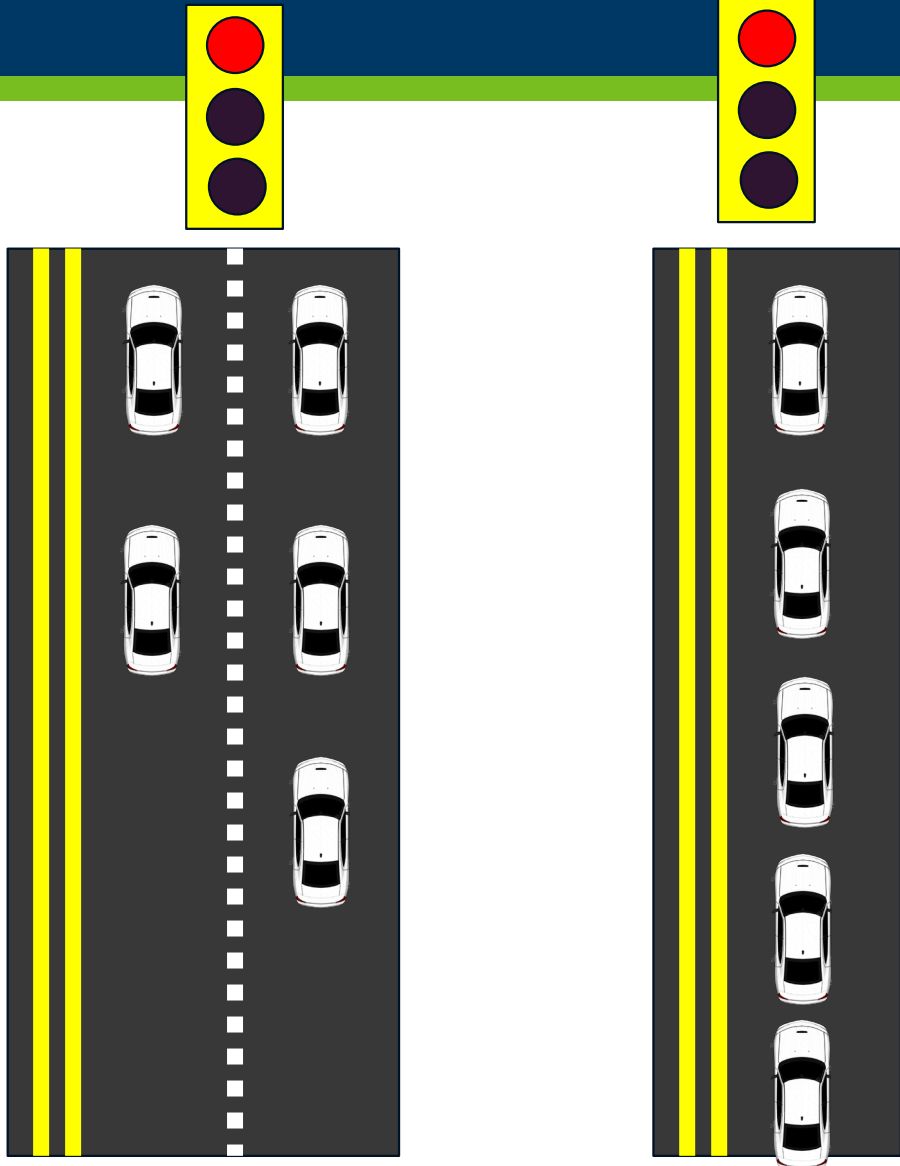
Traffic Operations Background and Info

Item 1.



Traffic Operations Background and Info

Item 1.



Going from two lanes in one direction to one lane will:

- Roughly double queue lengths at red lights
- Because the line of cars on Central is longer – signal needs to provide more “green time” to Central – reducing available green time for cross streets. Especially difficult at 37th / Reservoir with 5th intersection leg.
- Creates long “ platoons” that reduce gaps to turn left at stop controlled intersections like 39th, 42nd, 43rd

Traffic Operations Background and Info

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- Lane reduction is one of our most powerful safety countermeasures
- We did this in 2022 during the city sewer project – and while queues increased – they weren't as bad as the computer model is suggesting – why?



Safety Benefits:

4-Lane to 3-Lane, Road Diet Conversions

19-47%
reduction in total crashes.¹



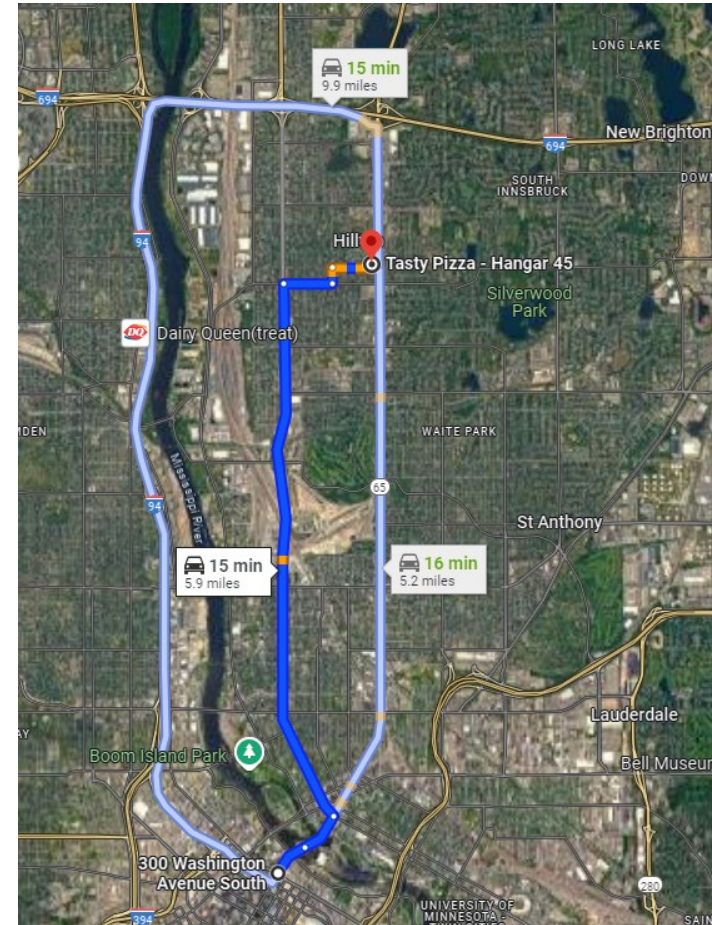
Traffic Operations Background and Info

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Traffic finds other ways to get around. Consider a hypothetical trip from downtown Minneapolis to Tasty Pizza.

- Google Maps suggests the fastest route – today – is **not** on Central but via University and 44th/45th
- I-94/694 is another faster – albeit longer – alternative

In a world where Central Ave. has fewer lanes drivers have good alternatives to get where they're going – and traffic will find ways to balance out.

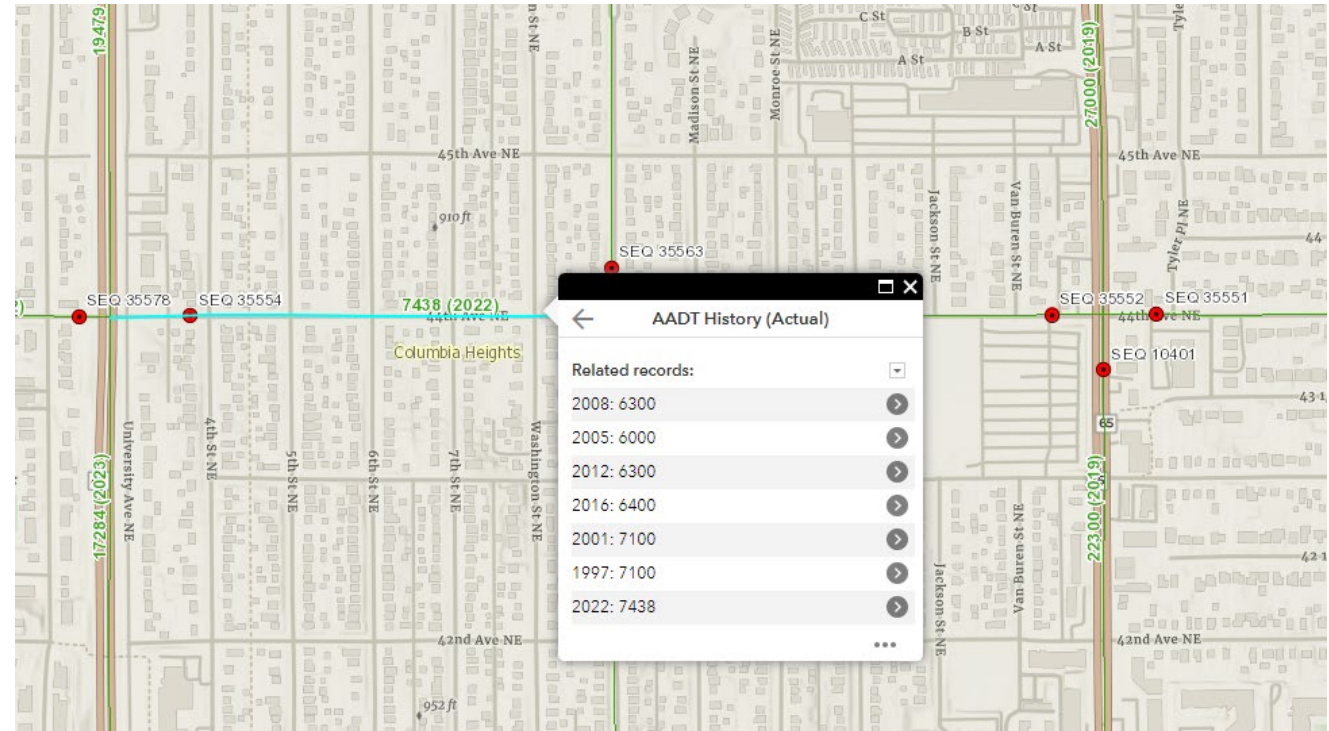


Traffic Operations Background and Info

It's difficult to predict the impact of traffic shifts on local roads. But consider what we do know from 2022 when Central was down to a single lane:

- Average traffic volume on 44th Ave. before 2022 is about 6500 cars/day
- Average traffic volume on 44th Ave. during 2022 was about 7400 cars/day – **13% increase**

It's reasonable to expect similar shifts on other cross-streets that connect Central and University like 37th, 40th, and 49th.



What we hope to share this month

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37th Ave. thru 41st Ave.

- One through lane in each direction can work*
- Consider bus lane(s) to improve traffic flow

(*see next slide)

41st Ave. thru 47th Ave.

- Serious safety issues
- One through lane in each direction results in long queues
- **Not making a decision on the number of lanes in this section at this time.**

49th Ave. through 53rd Ave.

- Lower pedestrian volumes and crashes
- Two through lanes needed to maintain acceptable operations
- Could consider alternative intersections

What we hope to share this month

Item 1.



- The 5th intersection leg at 37th/Reservoir is a key limiting issue for the traffic signal at the intersection.
- Removing the SB Reservoir access will do a lot to help Central work with only one lane in each direction, recommending conversion to NB right-in only.

What we hope to share this month

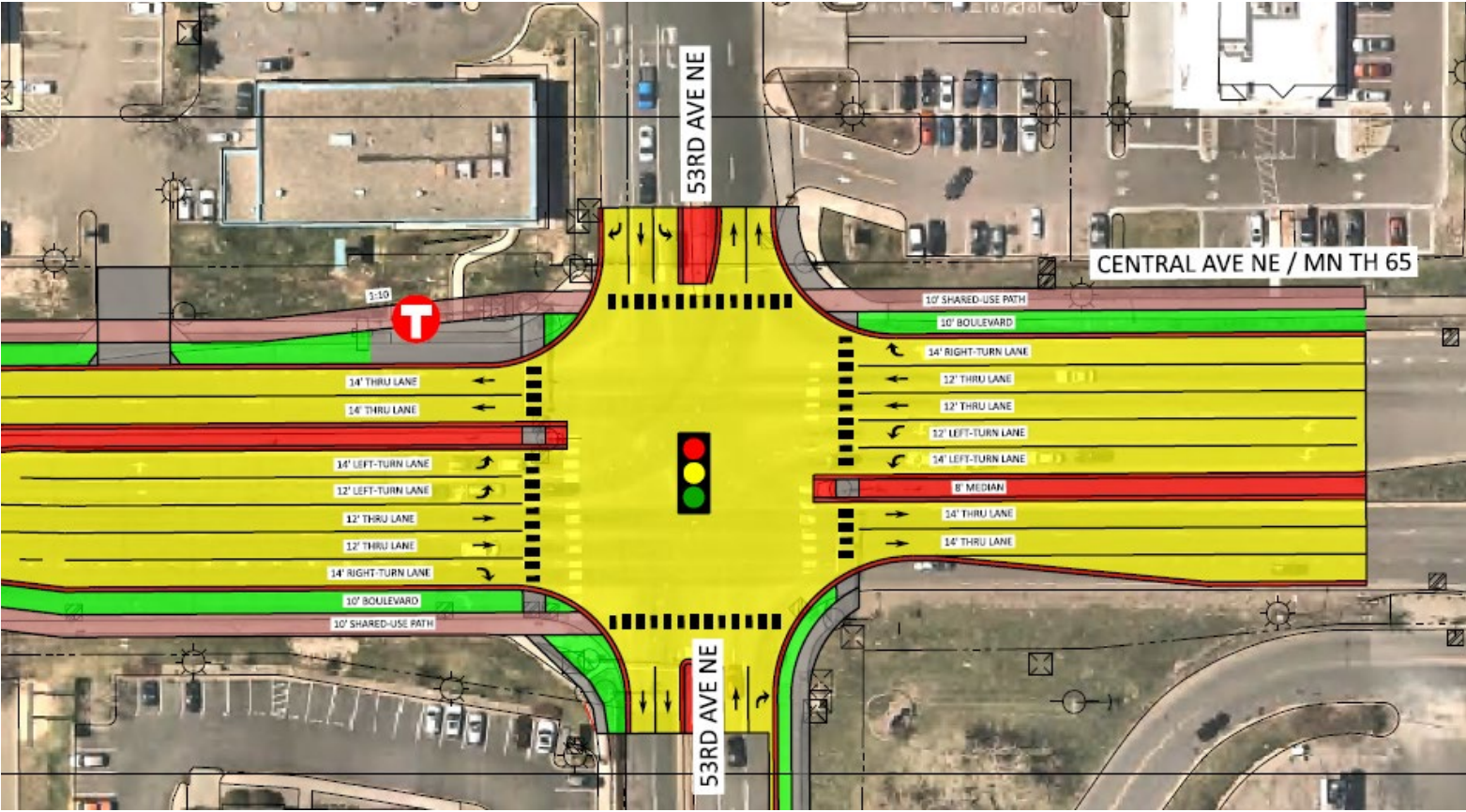
Item 1.



- The intersection of 42nd has a serious pedestrian crash history and is difficult to turn left from today
- It gets much harder to turn left here in a future where Central is only one lane in each direction
- Recommending constructing a median through this intersection, allowing right turns only.

What we hope to share this month

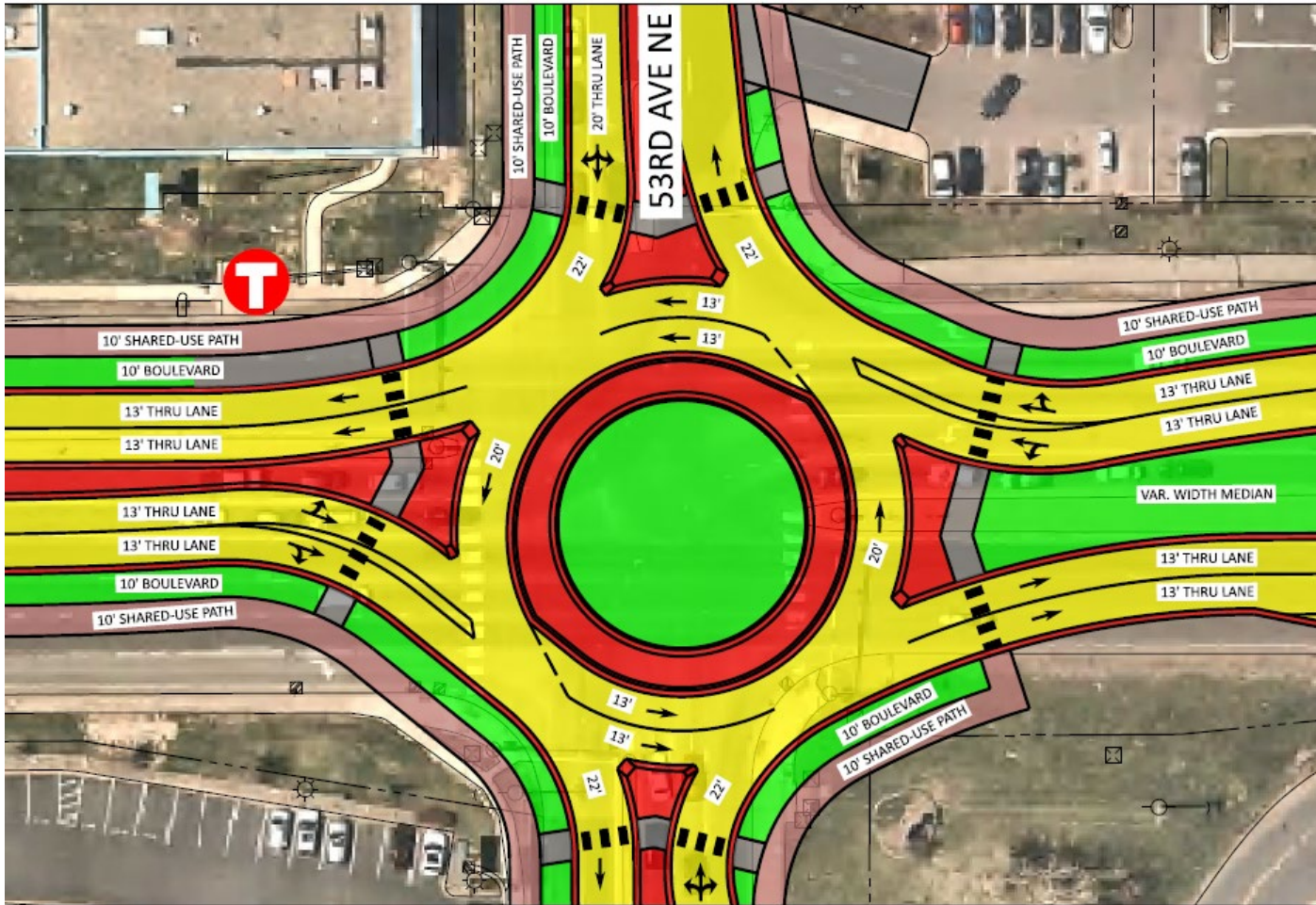
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- Traffic signals require large intersections near 694 – a traffic signal concept has up to 7 lanes that a pedestrian has to cross

What we hope to share this month

Item 1.



- A roundabout requires crossing only 4 lanes.

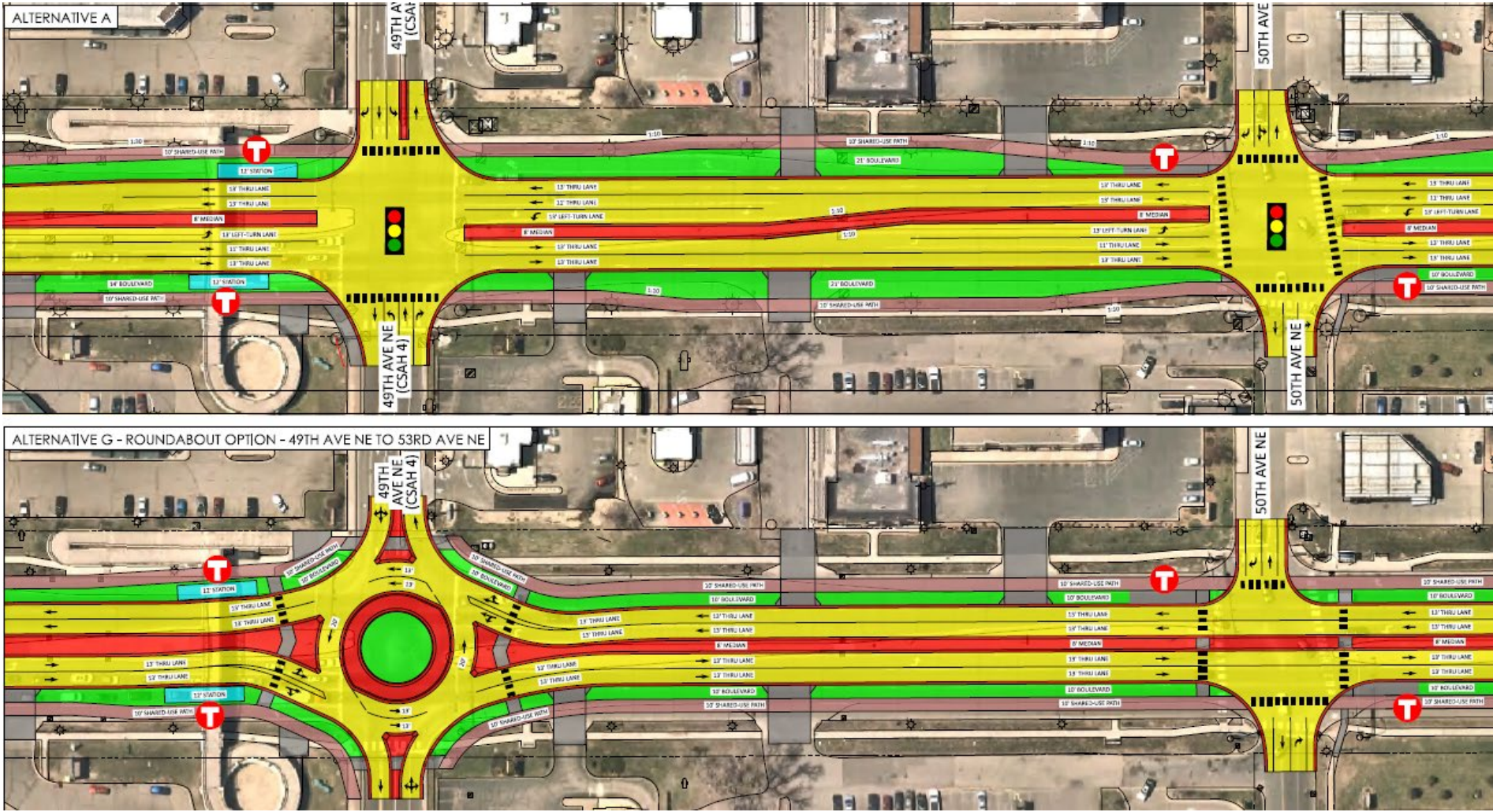
But we also need to consider:

- How we make pedestrian crossings safe and comfortable
- How to make it easy for drivers to navigate a multilane roundabout
- Roundabouts don't work well immediately adjacent to a signal. Requires additional changes to access.

Want to introduce this concept in more detail to the public, get feedback

What we hope to share this month

Item 1.



Questions?

Christopher Bower

christopher.bower@state.mn.us