



## TRAFFIC COMMISSION

City Hall—Council Chambers, 590 40th Ave NE

Tuesday, May 17, 2022

6:00 PM

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### AGENDA

#### **ATTENDANCE INFORMATION FOR THE PUBLIC**

Members of the public who wish to attend may do so in-person, by calling 1-312-626-6799 and entering meeting ID 831 6304 5370 and passcode 138976 or by Zoom at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83163045370?pwd=RTlTbW9JOW9Ka080VFpjNUq2SDZsdz09>. For questions please call the Public Works Department at 763-706-3700.

#### **CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

#### **APPROVE MINUTES**

1. ACCEPT MARCH 15, 2022 MINUTES
2. ACCEPT APRIL 19, 2022 MINUTES

#### **PUBLIC MEETING**

3. PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS SPEED LIMITS IN THE CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS

The Traffic Commission is seeking input from residents and property owners about the speed limit on streets in Columbia Heights. The law setting the minimum traffic speed of 30 mph has changed in Minnesota. The City Council has the authority to set speed limits on local roads. This does not include MnDOT or Anoka County roads.

The Traffic Commission is encouraging the public to attend this meeting and voice your opinion.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

4. ADDRESS ANY FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS FOR SARA ION, CITY CLERK, REGARDING MEETING ATTENDANCE/OPEN MEETING LAWS FOR BOARD/COMMISSION MEMBERS
5. 37TH AVENUE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

#### **REPORTS**

City Engineer

Police Chief

**Commissioners**

**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.*



## TRAFFIC COMMISSION

City Hall—Council Chambers, 590 40th Ave NE  
Tuesday, March 15, 2022  
6:00 PM

Item 1.

### **UNAPPROVED MINUTES**

#### **CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Schluender at 6:00 p.m.

Members present: Commissioners Ciesynski, Davis, Finkelson, Nekora, Schluender

Staff present: Kathy Young, Assistant City Engineer

Staff absent: Captain Markham, Police

Council Liaison: Connie Buesgens (for Amáda Márquez Simula)

#### **APPROVE MINUTES**

Motioned by Davis, seconded by Ciesynski, to approve the minutes of February 15, 2022 as presented.

Motion passed unanimously.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

##### **CONTINUE DISCUSSION ON TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY**

At the February meeting Commissioners agreed to continue the discussion on traffic and pedestrian safety. Commissioner Finkelson has recommended two motions for consideration, the first being updating the Traffic Commission page on the city website and the second to reduce the speed limit on city streets to 20 mph.

Finkelson would like to update the city website to make the process for traffic control requests clearer and easier for residents. Some residents are unsure of how to submit a request and of the process that follows. He would like the website to explain this in more detail. He would also like to add links to appropriate resources that will provide requesters with other options for traffic calming measures besides stop signs. Currently residents ask for a stop sign and it's either approved or denied per the MUTCD guidelines. Ciesynski feels the city's website is difficult to navigate. Davis agrees with providing residents with better access to information. It would be helpful if the website was more user-friendly.

Commissioners would like a link placed on the Traffic Commission webpage to the Report a Concern form with an explanation that the resident will receive a response and instructions once the form is reviewed by city staff. Commissioners would also like a list of all communication from residents, even if the items do not make it to the agenda. They would like this information included in the agenda packet. They would like a link to the Report a Concern form as well as links to the bicycle and city trails, maps, etc. placed on the Traffic Commission webpage. They feel including more information on the Traffic Commission page will make it easier for residents. Davis stated the sidewalk and trails map was last updated in 2011. Young thinks the trails map was updated more recent than 2011 but the date wasn't changed—she will check on it. The bicycle map was updated in 2019. Young advised that staff can add the links to the Report a Concern form and maps on the Traffic Commission webpage. However, commissioners should check what the City Council is going to support before posting links to sections of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. If there's a traffic calming option listed in the plan that the council is not going to support, it would be a disservice to residents.

to present that option. Finkelson asked how they are supposed to know what the council is going to support. Young advised she would leave those items as recommendations directed toward the City Council. Schluender feels it would be useful to link to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan transportation section because it's already on the website.

Finkelson stated that when the Traffic Commission recommended changing the speed limit on Stinson Blvd to the beach it was in the minutes but there was no follow up by the City Council. His understanding is that recommendations from the Traffic Commission first go to the City Manager and then the City Manager decides what is placed on the agenda. He feels this recommendation was pocket-vetoed by the City Manager. Young advised that the City Council wants to have a broader discussion regarding the speed limit and that this recommendation will then become part of that broader discussion.

Councilmember Buesgens explained that sometimes things take a long time. The council will be discussing the Traffic Commission at the next work session. Commissioners cannot participate but they can email items to councilmembers of things they want to see changed. She would like to see the Traffic Commission transformed into a more multimodal commission and that will be up for discussion. She advised that sometimes the City Manager will put items on her list if she knows a discussion is coming up down the road, which sometimes may take years. This is usually due to staffing limitations, time constraints, etc. There are many different reasons why an item may be addressed later. Things don't always get done quickly. She strongly suggests they all come to hear what the council has to say about the Traffic Commission. Davis asked about the timeline for addressing the speed limits. Councilmember Buesgens is not sure. Young advised the discussion she's aware of is that they plan to address the speed limits when they discuss 37<sup>th</sup> Ave and if Columbia Heights is interested in lowering the speed limit to 25 mph. The discussion will take place later this year or early next year and then they will plan what to do citywide.

Davis suggested posting items on the website that the council supports within item c (the link to the MnDOT best practices documents, Minnesota's Best Practices for Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety) to assist residents making requests. Young advised this may be part of a discussion with the City Council. Schluender feels their recommendations are broad enough that they can follow up at the next meeting and see what's happening with the links on the website. There is enough detail in the minutes for people to see what's being discussed. The motion does not have to be specific as long as they can follow up at the next meeting.

Motioned by Finkelson to adopt Item (1) requesting the Traffic Commission page of the city website be updated to make the request for traffic-related improvements process clearer for residents and provide links to the Report a Concern form and appropriate resources. Seconded by Schluender. Motion passed unanimously.

Finkelson feels we should reduce the speed limit in Columbia Heights citywide. His understanding is that there are two options. You have either a blanket 25 mph limit, which is what St. Anthony did, or you can implement a tiered limit where minor and residential streets are 20 mph and collectors are 25 mph. He personally favors the 20 mph. He would like to register the Traffic Commission's opinion regarding the speed limits with the City Council. Per the minutes the council wants to be consistent with the speed limits and the goal is to increase safety. The Traffic Commission heard from Ethan Fawley of Vision Zero that Minneapolis has seen good results with their speed limit reduction. Finkelson would like to make a motion

to recommend the City Council take a tiered approach of 20 mph on minor and residential streets and 25 mph on collector streets such as 37<sup>th</sup> Ave.

Davis opposes. He feels any road designed for truck traffic should stay at 30 mph. Because 37<sup>th</sup> Ave is the main east-west route from Central Ave to I-35W he feels it's important to keep it at 30 mph. He would support residential roads being at 25 mph but there are certain roads that should remain at 30 mph. These are roads that have a yellow centerline. Some of these are county roads so the speed limit may not change anyway. You do want to encourage the use of certain roads and avoid others. Some speed limits should remain at 30 mph to prevent heavy traffic in residential areas. There needs to be a balance and speed limits should be considered reasonable by most people. He would prefer more discussion before passing a motion.

Schluender feels one benefit of lowering the speed limit is that it sets a baseline expectation for the neighborhood roads. These are expectations where residents are not expecting through traffic. There should be justification for major roads versus residential roads. He agrees this needs additional discussion. A lower speed limit long-term is beneficial because it helps with redesigning the streets. You do not want a speed limit of 20 mph on 40<sup>th</sup> Ave with four lanes and parking. Staff should compare St. Anthony and Minneapolis speed limit changes to see how they're working. He would like to see more information.

Davis asked if 30 mph is a choice with the tiered approach. Finkelson will need to check. There are still a couple of city roads in Minneapolis that have a higher speed limit than 20 mph so there are exceptions. The real restriction is that you can't make every city road 20 mph but you can always increase the limit. Nekora agrees with contacting St Anthony and Minneapolis. Davis would like to table this for discussion.

Motioned by Davis to table reducing the speed limit on city streets until the next meeting. Seconded by Schluender. Motion passed unanimously.

#### REVIEW OTHER ITEMS DISCUSSED AT FEBRUARY MEETING

A representative from MnDOT will be attending the City Council Work Session on April 4<sup>th</sup> via Zoom. MnDOT will be updating the council on the PEL Study (Planning and Environmental Linkage) for TH 47 and TH 65. Opportunities for comment are provided on the MnDOT website:

<https://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/hwy47andhwy65study/index.html>

*Comprehensive Plan: Review and analyze high traffic crash locations on a biannual basis.*

The 2040 Comprehensive plan talks about analyzing high traffic crash locations. Staff has not done a formal review on TH 47 and TH 65, but MnDOT does inform us of the locations they're concerned about. There are opportunities for residents to approach staff and council about areas of concern. These are:

- Email and phone
- Traffic Commission
- Listening sessions with council and staff
- Annual city picnic
- Annual Public Improvement Hearings

Davis asked if there will be more traffic signal replacement along Central and University Avenues within the next year or two. Young will need get back to him. There are four signals that will be painted, so those will not be replaced. Minneapolis wants to replace one signal on 37<sup>th</sup> Ave as part of the 37<sup>th</sup> Ave project.

Finkelson asked about the listening sessions with council and staff. Buesgens advised these took place when they held the city expos, these were held on a Saturday. He also asked about the annual improvement hearings. Young explained that the majority of street projects are assessed, so as part of that process staff will host at least two informal meetings with the affected residents. Residents then can bring up both construction issues and issues they've seen on their street.

## NEW BUSINESS

None

## REPORTS

### City Engineer

#### 37TH AVENUE CONSTRUCTION

At the last meeting the 37<sup>th</sup> Ave plans were part of the discussion so the City Engineer included these at this meeting for commissioners to go over.

Davis stated there have been a few changes since the last review and asked where this input came from. The first change he noted is that there are quite a few crosswalk islands. Young advised those were generated by Minneapolis. Davis understands Polk St but is questioning the others. Young explained these were part of the agreement to move forward with the project.

Parking will be limited on 37<sup>th</sup> Ave, buses will stop in the traffic lane which is a safety request by the transit company.

Davis stated that on the north side of 37<sup>th</sup> west of Buchanan St. there is a row of houses that face 37<sup>th</sup> Ave. Can a second parking bay put into that section? Young explained parking bays were reviewed based on the driveway lengths and this would have had to have been brought up during the open houses with staff. Davis feels residents were unaware of the open houses as many are rental properties. He would like to see the parking reconsidered.

Davis is also concerned about the pedestrian bays because of what he saw on in Minneapolis on Johnson St, where the road curves throughout, especially with truck traffic having to meander through. He feels this is problematic, especially because it's a narrower road with no parking which leaves nowhere to go. Starting at Central Ave there's a tiny jog that goes in between there and Polk St. Can the median be kept a little wider so it's not going in and out—it gets wide, then narrow, then wide, etc. Young stated that when driving it will seem fairly straight. Davis did not find that when driving on Johnson St and he does not want to see the same thing on 37<sup>th</sup> Ave. He would like a more detailed map.

Davis asked the width of 37<sup>th</sup> Ave on the west side of Central where the parking was removed to add the trail and if the east side will be the same width or will it be narrower? Young will need to check the distance between the curb and centerline stripe on the east side compared to the west side. She advised for the most part it's 13', an 11' lane and 2' curb reaction. Davis would like her to let him know that west of Central will be designed the same as east of Central to make sure the lanes are both the same width.

Finkelson likes the pedestrian islands. Currently 37<sup>th</sup> Ave is difficult to cross. He likes the way it weaves a little because this will slow people down and the pedestrian islands will make it safer to cross. Young advised

part of that was at the request of Minneapolis. Because the bike trail is on the north side they want their residents to be able cross from the south side to the north side.

Davis stated there are some pedestrian areas that are rather close. Polk St to Central Ave in particular and between Johnson St and Buchanan St. Young advised the medians will not be removed. Davis does not want them removed but he feels the geometry is wrong. He would like to see these areas stay wide rather than narrow and then widen so it's not so extreme for truck traffic. It would make more sense to keep these wider through those sections. He would like more width to deal with the traffic. Young advised that other than at Central Ave, the lanes going in both directions are essentially 13' feet wide, an 11' lane with 2' reaction before you get to the vertical part of the curb. Davis stated with snow it's essentially 11'.

He also asked if the chokepoint at Hayes St could be created so there's not such a significant jog between the north and south side of Hayes St. The boulevard on the south side could be wider on the left instead of the right so there's less of a jog between the north and south side. Cross traffic now must veer at more of a diagonal.

Davis questioned Hart Blvd becoming narrower when traffic already is coming in at an angle at that spot. Young explained this definitely will force vehicles into one lane in each direction, but this makes it much safer for pedestrians to cross the street. It was done this way to try to square it up so it's at more of a 90 degree angle with 37<sup>th</sup> Ave.

Finkelson asked about Anoka County doing work on 40<sup>th</sup> Ave. Young advised they've applied for a couple of grants and so far, have been unsuccessful. The work will not be done without grant money because of the costs. She provided the costs we have to date for 37<sup>th</sup> Ave to give commissioners an idea of the financial impact for this type of construction. Originally the project started at \$11 million but as the design progressed the cost increased. They are looking for more funding sources. For example, they plan to approach the Mississippi Watershed Organization for the green infrastructure such as the stormwater type projects. New signals have been added at both Central Ave and Johnson St as part of the project.

Davis asked if there will be a change of configuration with the new signals. At one point he had suggested a change to the signals at 37<sup>th</sup> and Central Aves. He had suggested a green arrow for the westbound dedicated right turn lane onto northbound Central Ave. The lane is signed no turn on red. The green arrow for southbound traffic on Central Ave turning left (eastbound) onto 37<sup>th</sup> Ave follows the green light for the right turn lane onto northbound Central Ave and westbound traffic on 37<sup>th</sup> Ave. Davis had suggested having the green arrow for the dedicated right turn lane onto northbound Central Ave and the left turn signal for southbound Central Ave turning east on 37<sup>th</sup> Ave cycle at the same time. He feels this would allow a lot more traffic to go through and alleviate backups in the dedicated right turn lane during rush hour. There would still be the protection that no turn on red provides but it would allow more traffic to flow.

Councilmember Buesgens stated she was liaison on the Traffic Commission several years ago and she has seen a change in the commission since then. This commission is taking more initiative and more interest in being involved. She will bring this up to the city manager, council, and staff. Hopefully the council will allow the Traffic Commission to be more self-initiating and find a more formal way for them to bring items to the council. She strongly recommends zooming in or attending the April 4<sup>th</sup> work session at 7:00 pm. They meet

at the Public Safety building in the downstairs training room. She strongly recommends if anyone has ideas or suggestions about transforming this commission to send them to the council.

**Police Chief**

None

**Commissioners**

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motioned by Davis, seconded by Schluender to adjourn the meeting at 7:29 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.





## TRAFFIC COMMISSION

City Hall—Council Chambers, 590 40th Ave NE  
Tuesday, April 19, 2022  
6:00 PM

Item 2.

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### **UNAPPROVED MINUTES**

#### **CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Schluender at 6:03 p.m.

Members present: Commissioners Ciesynski, Davis, Finkelson, Nekora, Schluender

Staff present: Kathy Young, Assistant City Engineer  
Captain Markham, Police  
Sue Chapman, Administrative Assistant

Council Liaison: Amáda Márquez Simula

#### **GUEST SPEAKER**

Sara Ion, City Clerk / Council Secretary

Sara gave a brief refresher on meeting attendance/open meeting laws for commission members.

#### **CHAIRPERSON APPOINTMENT**

Chairperson Schluender has resigned as Chair of the Commission.

Motion by Finkelson to nominate Adam Davis as the new chairperson, seconded by Schluender. Nomination accepted by Davis. Motion by Schluender to implement nomination immediately. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Ciesynski to nominate Jared Finkelson as Vice Chair of the Commission, seconded by Davis. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **APPROVE MINUTES**

Motion by Davis, seconded by Schluender, to table acceptance of the March 15, 2022 minutes until the next meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

##### **CONTINUE DISCUSSION ON TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY**

At the March meeting commissioners agreed to table reducing the speed limit on city streets until the April meeting.

Finkelson advised he pulled data from MnDOT regarding reducing speed limits. Excluding data from 2020-21, which is preliminary, the data shows that from 2011-2019 approximately 48% of all crashes occurred on city or municipal state aid roads. He doesn't have the criteria for what MnDOT categorizes as serious crashes but out of 15 serious crashes, six were on city streets and two on municipal state aid roads, which is just over half of the streets under the City of Columbia Heights jurisdiction. He would like to make a

recommendation to the City Council to adopt a 20-25mph maximum speed limit. The 20-25mph would be consistent with the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Per Vision Zero lowering the speed limit does have some effect on slowing down traffic. Feels this would set the expectation for city staff when redesigning streets to keep the speed limit lower for people to be safe.

Davis asked Mayor Simula if there has been further discussion since the MnDOT meeting about what direction the City Council wants to take regarding the speed limit. She advised she wasn't at the work session but her notes indicate that for the most part the council was okay with MnDOT's presentation, but they still want to hear from the community. One councilmember was hoping for more traffic slowdown on Central Ave. There have been five accidents in the last three weeks on Central Ave. A PEL study was done two years ago before knowledge of the new apartment buildings that does not reflect the new data. Davis stated the recent accidents seem to be concentrated within a 4-block area that has no additional pedestrian lighting. This area has dark zones outside of the LED lights making it difficult to see pedestrians, especially if they're not right at the corner. He feels the LED lighting we've added is brighter but is more concentrated making it difficult to see outside of that zone. He would like the Traffic Commission to ask the council to look into some type of additional lighting in this area. North of 45<sup>th</sup> Ave is so wide that having only mid-block lighting is not adequate, coupled with coming from a 40mph speed limit. He feels this is a big enough concern to address now and not wait for a grant for lighting. He also asked about the pedestrian bump outs and where these would be placed on Central Ave. He feels 45<sup>th</sup> Ave to 49<sup>th</sup> Ave would be the most beneficial but is unsure of the Metro Transit using the shoulders as bus stops. Finkelson advised there is a list in the presentation or the risk assessment, but it only goes up to 45<sup>th</sup> Ave. Ciesynski questioned that since Central Ave is a state road, would MnDOT let the city install more lighting. Young advised they would, but MnDOT would need to be involved.

Motion by Davis to request the City Council consider adding additional basic or temporary lighting on Central Ave between 43<sup>rd</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Aves to increase public safety. Seconded by Finkelson. Motion passed unanimously.

A motion was made by Finkelson to recommend the City Council adopt a 20-25mph speed limit on city streets. Schluender stated he is in favor of this motion but thinks it should be an agenda item for the next meeting and the commission should try to get citizen input for discussion. Davis agrees more public input would be helpful and more valuable to the council. He would like a tiered speed limit of 20-25-30mph for different types of roads. Finkelson and Davis asked how to attain public attendance i.e., publicize a meeting. The City Clerk advised she would need to follow up on this as far as restrictions, jurisdiction of the commission, etc.

Motion by Davis to direct staff to explore how the Traffic Commission can hold a public hearing regarding a potential tiered speed limit of 20-25-30mph on local roads. Seconded by Ciesynski. Schluender added that it would be useful to include in the agenda packet a synopsis of what the legislation passed down to local entities, including the state statute referencing the guidelines and ability of the Traffic Commission, so the public understands where this is coming from. Motion passed unanimously.

The City Clerk advised she needs to research if the Traffic Commission has the authority to call for a public hearing regarding this item. There is a difference between a public meeting and a public hearing. A public hearing must be posted to the City's website and published in the city's legal newspaper. A public meeting can be posted on the website, commissioners can also have conversations with residents. Mayor Simula

advised commissioners can promote a public meeting on social media, i.e., there is a meeting on Tuesday, we'd like input, and list what the meeting is about on the agenda. Commissioners can also talk to neighbors. Commissioners agreed to be more specific on the next agenda regarding the speed limit in hope of obtaining more public input.

Davis asked for any information regarding the 25mph in St. Anthony. Young spoke with Zach Lunderberg, the St. Anthony Public Works Superintendent. He stated that when they first made the change they received some negative social media comments, but nothing major that needed to be addressed formally, and operationally everything seems to be going fine. Captain Markham exchanged emails with the St. Anthony Police Captain. He didn't have any hard data but stated with the change to the interior streets there seems to be fewer traffic complaints. They also installed digital speed display signs on Silver Lake Road at 31<sup>st</sup> Ave and on 37<sup>th</sup> Ave by Wilshire Elementary School with no strong objections from residents. Captain Markham is unaware if St. Anthony is collecting any hard data.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

None

## **REPORTS**

### **City Engineer**

The Central Ave traffic signals scheduled for painting are at 44<sup>th</sup>, 45<sup>th</sup>, 47<sup>th</sup>, 49<sup>th</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> Avenues. The signal at 50<sup>th</sup> Ave is fairly new and it's anticipated that the signal on Central and 40<sup>th</sup> Aves will be replaced within the next 10 years. MnDOT's new standard is to put up galvanized poles. It is up to the City if they want them painted and to provide the funding. The poles that are being painted are at the City's request and the City is funding this. Davis asked if the new signal on 40<sup>th</sup> Ave will have the flashing arrow, Young advised it will. He also questioned if there will be a longer walk time. Young advised studies are done prior to the signal replacement projects and we will know at that time. Davis also asked if the lighted street sign will be replaced. Young advised all new signals will have LED lights, so she anticipates when 40<sup>th</sup> is redone the new signal will have LED lights.

LRRB (Local Road Research Board) studies are underway. This shows that other cities are dealing with the same issues as the Traffic Commission, i.e., the impact of speed limits, factors that influence vehicles stopping for pedestrians, impact of warning devices. All these studies are underway; some will be done in 2023 and others in 2024. These studies are not specific to Central Ave, they're general.

Young asked what commissioners envision the May meeting to entail and what they are looking for from staff. Davis advised one item is the public meeting regarding the speed limit. He also wanted to provide some feedback on 37<sup>th</sup> Ave but needs more time to review. Ciesynski asked about the time frame for a public meeting notice. Young advised a public meeting notice needs to be posted three days before the meeting and does not require legal publication. For a public hearing, commissioners would need to formally call for a public hearing and a legal public hearing notice would need to be published a minimum of 10 days prior to the hearing date. Schluender suggested specifying this agenda item as lowering the city speed limit to 20mph so the public is aware this is coming up and if interested can attend the meeting. Commissioners can also assist with spreading this information to residents. After this public meeting commissioners can vote on the speed limit. If citizens know ahead of time from social media, etc. and are interested they will attend the meeting. Nekora agrees with this suggestion. Otherwise, commissioners will need to wait until

the June meeting and then it will be getting into summer. Commissioners agreed to put reducing city speed limits on the May agenda and to spread the word via social media and/or talking to neighbors. Young and the City Clerk will work together on what can be placed on the city website to publicize the meeting.

### **Police Chief**

Captain Markham advised the Police Department is very much aware of the traffic issues on Central Ave lately and is undertaking extra patrol. They are concerned about the crashes.

Captain Markham asked the Traffic Commission to consider one speed limit throughout the city versus tiered limits. Currently if you're on a residential street you know it's 30mph. If you're on a residential street and you need to guess between 10-15-20-30mph it may create confusion for drivers and is definitely harder to enforce, i.e., if there are three different speed limits within a three-quarter mile stretch. Schluender advised Minneapolis and St. Paul put up entrance signs that say 20mph unless otherwise posted. From what he understands, it is the intent of the legislative action that a city can lower the speed limit to 20mph and then if wanted, can designate the speed limit on an arterial road to 25mph. Or cities can take the approach that St. Anthony did and have a citywide speed limit of 25mph.

Captain Markham agreed with Davis about the lighting on 47<sup>th</sup> Ave, it's very hard to see pedestrians, especially if they're dressed in dark clothing. Another thing that needs to be looked at is bus stops. Is it necessary to have a bus stop on every block or is better to control them. It would be better for bus stops to be located at controlled intersections so pedestrian must use the crosswalk at the light, making things safer and easier to control. Police is currently working on this in the background with MnDOT and Zero Death.

Ciesynski asked about Columbia Academy-- parents are taking up the only through lane for traffic. Captain Markham stated he has been dealing with this traffic issue all year and working with the academy to try to keep the loop drop-off moving. He has received numerous complaints but does not know how else to improve the situation. There is a high volume of car traffic, more parents pick up and drop off. Police has CSO's present mornings and evenings, and the school district has three officers directing. They continue to tweak the situation; the flow has improved but it's not ideal. They are doing the best they can.

Finkelson questioned enforcement of drivers that fail to yield to pedestrians. Captain Markham advised they have run a program for several years and used community outreach to educate pedestrians. Pedestrians and drivers are equally at fault, it's a combination problem. Before COVID they were carrying out enforcement of both vehicle and pedestrian traffic and providing educational handouts to each.

Davis questioned removal of certain bus stops to control pedestrian crossing. Captain Markham explained this was a goal prior to COVID but at this point it's at the control of Metro Transit; once they're on board they will try to move forward. Schluender advised the "10" line is being converted to the "F" line through the BRT and there will be less stops. Captain Markham stated the bus stop that's problematic is at 46-1/2 Ave. On Central Ave, 45<sup>th</sup> to 47<sup>th</sup> Ave is uncontrolled so a pedestrian can cross the street anywhere legally and there's also bad lighting. If a northbound bus drops someone off, that person may try to dart across Central Ave towards Hilltop. These are a couple of the west to east issues. There's definitely room for improvement in that area.

Finkelson asked about making the intersections at 46<sup>th</sup> and 46-1/2 Aves safer for pedestrians, even without a bus stop. There's still a lot of pedestrians that will use that area and he feels we should focus our energy

on making these intersections safe for crossing the street. Captain Markham advised that a pedestrian crossing at 43<sup>rd</sup> Ave is \$300,000. He's doing the best he can from the enforcement side with what he has to work with. We need to develop a relationship with MTC and try to get something done there such as lighting and traffic control devices, but this is a much bigger process.

Ciesynski stated that the bus stops were a big selling point when they built the multi-units at the old K-Mart site, as to quick access to the downtown bus line, so removing these may cause some discontent. Davis is concerned that removing bus stops and implementation of the "F" line may cause accessibility issues and increase the distance seniors need to walk to the bus stop, making it less feasible for them to use it.

Captain Markham advised that from 47<sup>th</sup> to 49<sup>th</sup> Ave some people use the 49<sup>th</sup> Ave walk bridge and others just dart across Central Ave if they're trying to catch the bus. If there were planters in-between this area it would make it more difficult to cross the street, so you would be controlling the pedestrian traffic which would reduce the likelihood of a crash. Mayor Simula added that if the bus dropped pedestrians at the traffic light they would cross at the traffic light, which would be the safest place, instead of in the middle of the block. We currently have two mid-block bus stops. It's not about removing the bus stops but relocating them to drop people off at the light. She is taking notes and reporting back to MnDOT with the BRT to ensure that the bus stop is at a safe place to cross. Davis advised people don't like to take the corners, they'll take the diagonal whenever possible, whether it's a bus stop or just crossing the street in general. Captain Markham agrees, they'll always take the shortest route. That's why he feels barriers on Central Ave would make it more difficult for pedestrians to just shoot across. Finkelson asked about the legalities of crossing the street. Captain Markham explained that at controlled intersections such as 44<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> Aves, you must cross at the light, but 47<sup>th</sup> Ave is not controlled so people can cross wherever they want. This is not much different than the Safe Systems program Minneapolis has run, Crime Prevention through Environmental Design; through environmental design you're trying to safely move people to an area where they're not going to get hit by cars. It's not about taking away accessibility. Finkelson feels we should use environmental controls to slow down traffic to make it safe to cross the street. Captain Markham advised that moving a bus stop one-half block and having a traffic light to cross the street is safer for pedestrians. Mayor Simula added this includes traffic speeds, the two work together. Finkelson feels that because of the restaurants and businesses on Central Ave people are still going to cross at 46<sup>th</sup> and 46-1/2 Aves. Mayor Simula advised all options will be discussed.

### **Commissioners**

Schluender stated that draft of the website changes that includes links to the maps looks really nice.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motioned by Adams, seconded by Schluender to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.



## TRAFFIC COMMISSION

Item 3.

|                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| AGENDA SECTION | OLD BUSINESS |
| MEETING DATE   | MAY 17, 2022 |

|             |  |                                   |
|-------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| ITEM:       | Public Meeting to Discuss Speed Limits in the City of Columbia Heights |                                   |
| DEPARTMENT: | Public Works   | BY/DATE: Kathy Young/May 12, 2022 |

**BACKGROUND:** At the April meeting commissioners discussed reducing the speed limit on city streets. They are in favor of a 20-25mph speed limit but feel public input would be very helpful. A public meeting will be held on May 17, 2022 with hopes the public will attend and voice their opinion regarding this matter.

The State Statute concerning speed limits on city streets is attached.

|                            |
|----------------------------|
| RECOMMENDED MOTION(S):     |
| MOTION: None at this time. |

**ATTACHMENT(S):** State Statute  
City Map

## 2021 Minnesota Statutes

### 169.14 SPEED LIMITS, ZONES; RADAR.

#### Subd. 5. **Zoning within local area.**

##### Subd. 5h. **Speed limits on city streets.**

A city may establish speed limits for city streets under the city's jurisdiction other than the limits provided in subdivision 2 without conducting an engineering and traffic investigation. This subdivision does not apply to town roads, county highways, or trunk highways in the city. A city that establishes speed limits pursuant to this section must implement speed limit changes in a consistent and understandable manner. The city must erect appropriate signs to display the speed limit. A city that uses the authority under this subdivision must develop procedures to set speed limits based on the city's safety, engineering, and traffic analysis. At a minimum, the safety, engineering, and traffic analysis must consider national urban speed limit guidance and studies, local traffic crashes, and methods to effectively communicate the change to the public.



# CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS

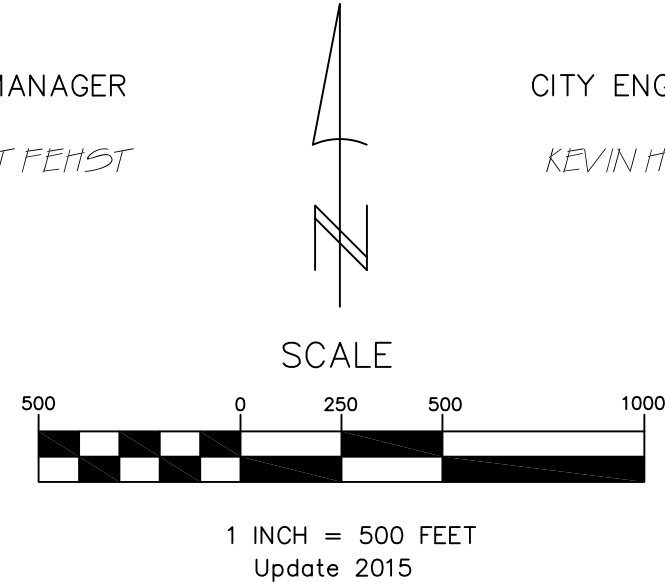
ANOKA COUNTY , MINN

CITY MANAGER

WALT FEHST

CITY ENGINEER

KEVIN HANSEN



## NOTE:

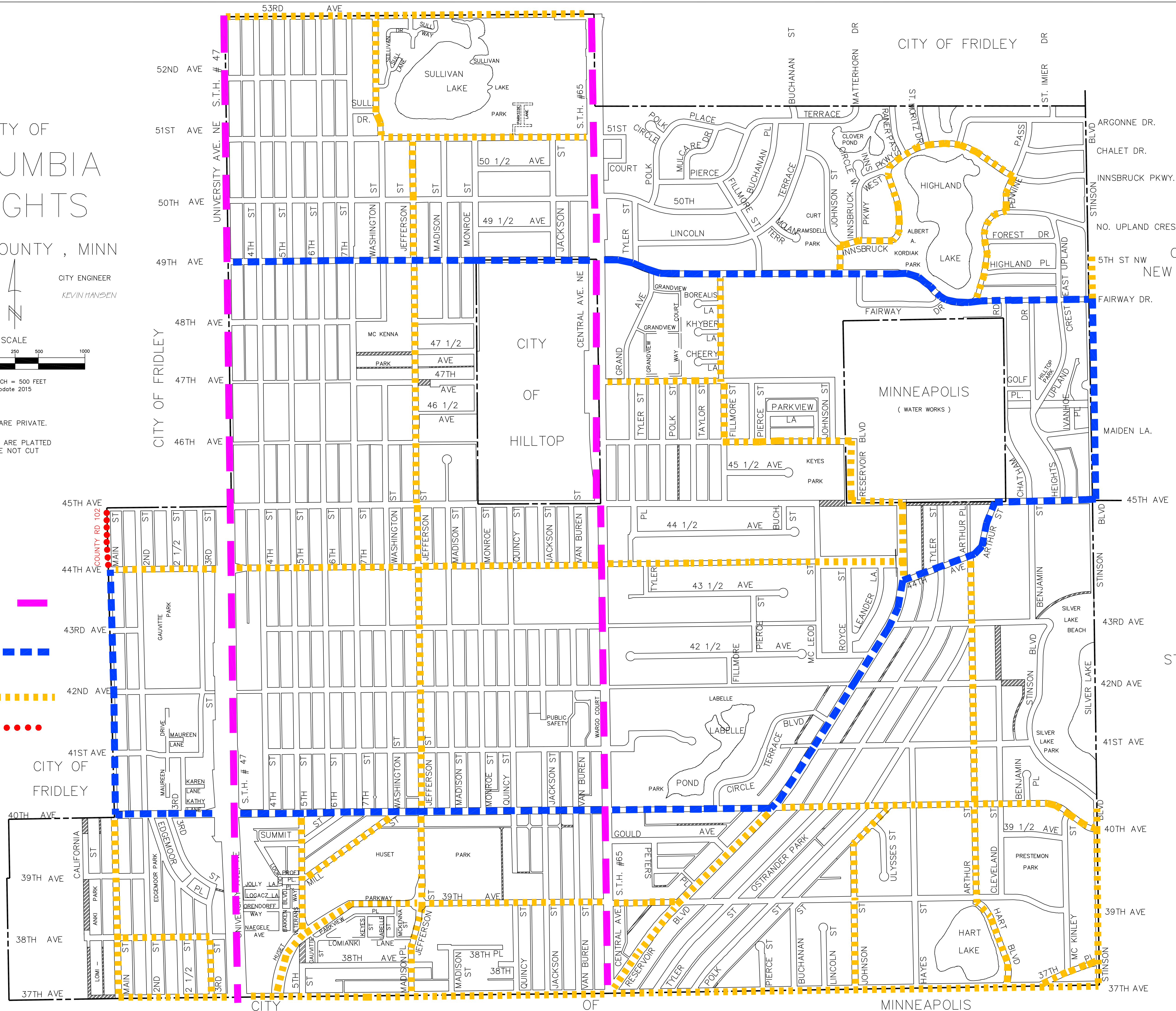
1. STREETS SHOWN DASHED ARE PRIVATE.
2. STREETS SHOWN HATCHED ARE PLATTED RIGHT-OF-WAY WHICH ARE NOT CUT THROUGH.

STATE TRUNK HWY. 

COUNTY STATE AID 

MUNICIPAL STATE AID 

COUNTY ROAD # 102 







# 37TH AVENUE NORTHEAST RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

EXHIBIT  
NO. 17



