

# Action Transmittal

Transportation Advisory Board



**Committee Meeting Date:** February 19, 2025

**Date:** February 12, 2025

## Action Transmittal: 2025-06

Program Year Extension Request: Columbia Heights's Central Avenue Lighting and Pedestrian Improvements

**To:** Transportation Advisory Board

**From:** Technical Advisory Committee

**Prepared By:** Joe Barbeau, Planning Analyst, 651-602-1750

### Requested Action

The City of Columbia Heights requests a program year extension to move its MN 65 (Central Avenue) lighting and pedestrian improvement from 2025 to 2028.

### Recommended Motion

That the Transportation Advisory Board approve Columbia Heights's program year extension request for its MN 65 (Central Avenue) lighting and pedestrian improvement from 2025 to 2028.

### Project History

This project has not had any scope changes or program year changes.

### Background and Purpose

Columbia Heights is requesting an exception to the Program Year Extension Policy by moving its project out three years. The city was awarded \$2,000,000 in the 2022 Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) solicitation for continuous street lighting, sidewalk improvements, ADA curb ramps, and crosswalk markings on MN 65 (Central Avenue) from 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue to 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The project was programmed for fiscal year 2025. Following the MN 65 / MN 47 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study, MnDOT committed \$25 million to the TH 65 corridor for fiscal year 2028. This request will enable the city's project to be constructed alongside MnDOT's project along with Metro Transit's 2028 F Line arterial bus rapid transit project.

### Relationship to Regional Policy

The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) adopted the Program Year Policy in April 2013 (updated in August 2014) to assist with management and timely delivery of transportation projects awarded federal funding through the TAB's Regional Solicitation. The policy includes a procedure to request a one-year extension based on extenuating circumstances within certain guidelines. The applicant is requesting an exception to the policy to enable the project to be constructed with larger adjacent projects.

## Staff Analysis

This project is on track to progress alongside MnDOT's TH 65 corridor project. This is an exception to the current program year policy rule allowing for a one-year extension but given that the request is consistent with recent exceptions to the policy, staff recommends approval for the sake of efficiently combining the two projects. The MnDOT staff that administers the HSIP funds has balanced the program years for the HSIP projects.

## Committee Comments and Action

At its January 23, 2025, meeting, the TAC Funding and Programming Committee recommended approval of the City of Columbia Heights's program year extension request for its MN 65 (Central Avenue) lighting and pedestrian improvement from 2025 to 2028.

At its February 5, 2025, meeting, the Technical Advisory Committee recommended approval of the City of Columbia Heights's program year extension request for its MN 65 (Central Avenue) lighting and pedestrian improvement from 2025 to 2028.

## Routing

To	Action Requested	Date Completed (Date Scheduled)
TAC Funding & Programming Committee	Review & Recommend	January 23, 2025
Technical Advisory Committee	Review & Recommend	February 5, 2025
Transportation Advisory Board	Review & Adopt	<i>February 19, 2025</i>





December 17, 2024

Mr. Michael Thompson, P.E.  
Chair, TAC Funding and Programming Committee  
Metropolitan Council  
390 Robert Street North  
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: Program Year Extension Request for SP 113-010-023  
Central Avenue Lighting and Pedestrian Improvements

Dear Mr. Thompson:

The City of Columbia Heights was awarded \$2,000,000 in Federal HSIP funding for continuous street lighting, sidewalk improvements, ADA curb ramps, and crosswalk markings along Central Avenue (TH 65) from 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue to 47<sup>th</sup> Avenue through the solicitation that was opened up in 2022. These funds were awarded for program year 2025.

Since the HSIP funds were awarded to the City, several new developments have come up as a result of the TH 65 and TH 47 PEL planning study that MnDOT started in Spring 2020. Through the PEL process, MnDOT recognized the strong need for safety improvements on TH 65 and have committed \$25 million in funding to make large scale improvements to the corridor through Columbia Heights from 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 53<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. This funding is scheduled for 2028.

In order to be efficient and fiscally responsible with the HSIP funding that the City has been awarded, we are requesting a program year extension to allow the funds to be spent in 2028 to line up with MnDOT's project as well as Metro Transit's F-Line project which has also been delayed to 2028. The extension request to 2028 is an exception to the one-year extension limitation. The City feels the exception is justified so that all projects scheduled for the corridor can be done concurrently. The City has been closely coordinating and collaborating with MnDOT and Metro Transit on all improvements that will be coming forward along Central Avenue.

If there is any additional information or questions about this program year extension request, please do not hesitate to contact me at [skhan@columbiaheightsmn.gov](mailto:skhan@columbiaheightsmn.gov) or 763-706-3704. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sulmaan Khan, PE  
Assistant City Engineer  
City of Columbia Heights

## **1. Project Progress**

### **a. Progress Schedule**

See information in Attachment 1.

### **b. Right of Way Acquisition**

The City was anticipating the need for temporary easements in order to build the reconstructed concrete sidewalk, ped ramps, curb, crosswalks, and lighting. MnDOT is currently in the process of selecting the preferred design for Central Avenue which is expected to be established early to mid 2025. Municipal Consent will follow this. Construction is planned for 2028. Right of way needs for the City will be determined once an approved layout for Central Avenue is developed.

### **c. Plans**

Final design for MnDOT's Central Avenue project is anticipated to begin mid to late 2025. The City is proposing to have safety improvements on Central Avenue completed in conjunction with MnDOT's project in 2028. The City plans to coordinate with MnDOT to combine the City's HSIP project into the larger Central Avenue project.

### **d. Permits**

A MnDOT permit will potentially be necessary. The need for this will be determined once the City and MnDOT coordinate on how each agency's project will be rolled out.

### **e. Approvals**

The City will need MnDOT's approval for plans along with MnDOT State Aid's approval for a project memorandum. Based on how the City's project is coordinated with MnDOT's project, this will be determined once final design for Central Avenue is advanced.

### **f. Funding/Expenditures**

Other than internal staff time, the City has not spent any additional funds on the project. The decision to do this was based on MnDOT's plan for a larger scale project to be done on Central Avenue three years after the program year for the City's HSIP project.

## **2. Justification for Extension Request**

### **a. What is unique about this project that requires an extension of the program year?**

MnDOT has funding programmed in 2028 to reconstruct the full stretch of Central Avenue through Columbia Heights from 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 53<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. Current design concepts for this project show certain segments being narrowed down from a 4-lane roadway

to a 2-lane roadway, moving the curb line, adding ped/bike infrastructure, access closures, new medians, and implementing roundabouts at select intersections. If the City were to move forward with constructing their HSIP project in 2025, all of the improvements likely will need to be removed and redone in 2028 with MnDOT's project. The improvements that would be made with the City's HSIP project would only have a life of about three years. Because of this, the City in collaboration with MnDOT staff have agreed that requesting an extension of the City's HSIP project to 2028 would make the most sense and be the most fiscally responsible decision for the community and stakeholders in the area.

**b. What are the financial impacts if this project does not meet its current program year?**

Central Avenue in Columbia Heights currently is seeing an average of at least one serious or fatal pedestrian crash annually. Efforts from both the City as well as the State have come forward to address the safety issues such as pursuing safety funding and completing a PEL study. What has been realized is that the safety issues are so severe that a redesign of Central Avenue is necessary to help minimize the issues that exist. If the City's HSIP project is not granted a program year extension, the safety funds that were awarded will need to be waived. Central Avenue through Columbia Heights currently is one of the most dangerous corridors to travel on based on recent crash data. Waiving the safety funding that has been awarded can have an impact on how much the City and State will be able to fund through local and state funds that are available.

**c. What are the implications if the project does not obtain the requested extension?**

If the project does not obtain the requested extension, the City will either have to move forward with constructing the HSIP improvements in 2025 just to have them removed in 2028 in order to build MnDOT's project or the HSIP funding will have to be waived.

**d. What actions will the agency take to resolve the problems facing the project in the next three to six months?**

The City has been closely coordinating with MnDOT, and will continue to do so, for the preliminary design as well as the final design of the Central Avenue project through Columbia Heights. Both the City and MnDOT are fully committed to implementing safety improvements on Central Avenue and will work together to ensure this happens with the project that MnDOT is planning to construct in 2028.

# Regional Program Year Policy

TAB Adopted: April 17, 2013  
Administrative Modifications: August 20, 2014

## Attachment 1: Progress Schedule for Program Year Extension

Enter request date

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Check status of project under each major heading.
2. Enter dates as requested for each major heading.
3. Enter points as suggested by each applicable response.
4. Total points received in the TOTAL POINTS line on the last page. **The minimum score to be eligible to request an extension is seven points.**

### ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

#### PROJECT MEMORANDUM

\_\_\_\_\_ Reviewed by State Aid If checked enter 4. \_\_\_\_\_

Date of approval \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Completed/Approved If checked enter 5. \_\_\_\_\_

Date of approval \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ EA

\_\_\_\_\_ Completed/Approved If checked enter 2. \_\_\_\_\_

Date of approval \_\_\_\_\_

X EITHER  
Not Complete

Anticipated Date of Completion Spring 2026 with SP 0207-130  
If prior to January 31 of the program year, enter 1. \_\_\_\_\_

### OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC HEARING (not necessary for project memorandum)

\_\_\_\_\_ Completed

Date of Hearing \_\_\_\_\_ If checked enter 2. \_\_\_\_\_

NA Not Complete

Anticipated Date of Completion \_\_\_\_\_  
If prior to February 28 of the program year, enter 1. \_\_\_\_\_

### FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (not required for project memorandum)

\_\_\_\_\_ Completed/FONSI Approved If checked enter 2. \_\_\_\_\_

Date of approval \_\_\_\_\_

NA Not Complete

Anticipated Date of Completion \_\_\_\_\_  
If prior to March 31 of the program year, enter 1. \_\_\_\_\_

### STUDY REPORT (required for Environmental Assessment Only)

\_\_\_\_\_ Complete/Approved If checked enter 1. \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Approval \_\_\_\_\_

NA Not Complete

Anticipated Date of Completion \_\_\_\_\_

## Regional Program Year Policy

TAB Adopted: April 17, 2013

Administrative Modifications: August 20, 2014

### CONSTRUCTION PLANS

Completed (includes signature of District State Aid Engineer)  
Date \_\_\_\_\_ If checked enter 3. \_\_\_\_\_

Completed (approved by District State Aid as to SA Standards but not signed)  
Date \_\_\_\_\_ If checked enter 2. \_\_\_\_\_

Not Complete  
Anticipated Date of Completion Spring 2027 with SP 0207-130  
If prior to June 30 of the program year, enter 1. \_\_\_\_\_

### RIGHT OF WAY ACQUISITION

Completed (includes approval of R/W Cert. #1 or #1A) If checked enter 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Not Complete  
Anticipated Date of Completion \_\_\_\_\_  
If prior to December 31 of the year following the original program year, enter 1. \_\_\_\_\_

### ENGINEERS ESTIMATE OF COSTS

Completed If checked enter 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Not Complete  
Anticipated Date of Completion Summer 2027 with SP 0207-130  
If prior to December 31 of the year following the original program year, enter 1. \_\_\_\_\_

### AUTHORIZED

Anticipated Letting Date Winter 2027 with SP 0207-130  
Anticipated letting date must be prior to June 30  
in the year following the original program year,  
so that authorization can be completed prior to  
June 30 of the extended program year.

TOTAL POINTS

0



Minnesota Department of Transportation  
1500 County Road B2, Roseville MN 55113

December 16, 2024

Sulmaan Khan, PE  
City Engineer  
Columbia Heights  
Via Email

Dear Sulmaan,

As requested, I'm providing a letter of support for a program year extension for SP 113-010-023. This project is a planned safety project on TH 65 (Central Ave.) in Columbia Heights that will make sidewalk and lighting improvements between 43<sup>rd</sup> Ave. and 47<sup>th</sup> Ave.

MnDOT is currently planning to reconstruct Central Ave. in this area as part of a larger project, SP 0207-130 (TH 65), that is scheduled for an FY 2028 letting. This larger project is intended to improve pavement condition, improve roadway safety for all users (drawing on the results of the Highway 47/65 Planning and Environmental Linkages Study) and construct multimodal improvements in coordination with Metro Transit's F Line BRT.

The work that is proposed with SP 113-010-023 in 2025 will potentially be impacted with SP 0207-130 in 2028. Among other improvements, SP 0207-130 aims to construct improved sidewalks and/or bicycle facilities along TH 65. The proposed sidewalks/bike facilities will almost certainly impact any lighting, curb ramps, or sidewalks constructed in 2025 – there is no easy way to build roadside infrastructure in 2025 in a way to avoid impacts with the MnDOT project in 2028. MnDOT is recommending that we defer construction of sidewalks/lighting in Columbia Heights to FY 2028 so they can be constructed as part of the larger project and we avoid the potential to impact work that is constructed in 2025.

MnDOT will include sidewalk improvements and lighting construction that was planned with SP 113-010-023 with SP 0207-130 in 2028. A program year extension will allow flexibility to help fund these safety improvements with the larger MnDOT project in 2028.

Sincerely,

**Christopher Bower** Digitally signed by Christopher  
Bower  
Date: 2024.12.16 16:22:33 -06'00'

North Area Engineer