Response to Questions on the FY 2014 Budget

Request By: Supervisor Hudgins

Question: When considering their CIP requirements, what consideration has FCPS given to integrating transportation requirements in this analysis? What options are FCPS considering to reduce the costs of school renovations?

Response: The following response was prepared by Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS):

When considering Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) requirements and creating the CIP, FCPS considers any possible effects that the locations and settings of school facilities and boundaries might have on the student transportation program. Invariably, FCPS looks at proximity of students and transportation distances, attendance adjustments, and potential impacts from grandfathering students at their current schools. The most recent boundary study is an example of considering proximity of students to schools so that in responding to community desires, students are moved closer in proximity to facilities that are closer to their homes. In addition, FCPS has considered ways to utilize public transportation and Fairfax Connector bus lines, which have presented challenges related to peak demand periods. FCPS has also explored the potential use of Fairfax County Fastran bus services; however, the Fastran vehicles are not built to meet legally mandated school bus standards in Virginia. Although public transportation has been considered, internal transportation has continued to be the most efficient and effective transportation method.

FCPS continually examines renovation costs to meet its current and future needs. FCPS has much lower bids on a cost per square foot basis compared to other local jurisdictions. Requirements continue to evolve that affect renovations such as:

Enrollment Growth: Increases in enrollment growth is one of the two main factors impacting the size of a school, therefore increasing the cost of renovations. The variables impacting enrollment are economic trends and commercial and real estate development trends

Programmatic Changes: This is the significant second factor influencing the size of a school. During the early 1990s we began adding full-sized gymnasiums, libraries, music rooms, special needs, and extended-learning spaces to adhere to these programmatic changes. Space requirements have evolved within our schools. Currently, schools have spaces dedicated to preschool, speech and reading specialists, self-contained rooms for children across the special education spectrum, music and fine arts, extended learning spaces, just to name a few.

Code Requirements: Many of these learning spaces have increased in size over time based upon code requirements. For example, science classrooms sizes have almost doubled over the past 25 years based upon the code requirements.

Transportation: Modifications to the parking area and vehicular access increase costs but are necessary. Schools are often located within the heart of a community, therefore the impact of our buildings on the quality of life for the nearby residents is always considered. To alleviate the impact to the local residences, we've constructed kiss and ride lanes on our property when possible.

Environment Sustainability: Implementation of sustainable features, many of which are mandated by code requirements, although the majority are in response to FCPS' desire to be good environmental stewards. Last fiscal year we spent nearly a quarter of the capital funding on sustainable features such as high efficiency mechanical and electrical systems, new trees and shrubs, cool roofs, and storm water management.

County Partnerships – SACC: Another essential aspect of our renovation projects is the creation of new spaces to support county initiatives. Currently, there are School Age Child Care programs operating at 137 schools.

Several options to reduce costs exist; however, they negatively impact FCPS' need to meet current and future needs listed above. These options include:

Extending the renovation period: This option creates a long and extensive renovation cycle, therefore additional maintenance and facility inequities become more pronounced.

Renovating buildings without any space configuration or additional square footage: The impacts are: absent reconfiguration and addition it is likely that the facility could not meet the current educational planning; inequities between schools become severely pronounced. The approximate savings with this option: 15-20 percent for elementary schools, 25-35 percent for middle schools, and 25-35 percent for high schools.

Renovating, and constructing additions to buildings where they would fit best on site: This option ignores program relationships to already existing interior programs. Also, this option does not include reconfiguration of existing interior spaces. The lack of interior reconfiguration can negatively impact full implementation of educational programs. The most significant impact would be inequity between facilities renovated under this model and those renovated prior. The approximate savings would be: 15-20 percent.

Upgrading infrastructure and utilities only: The first impact is that it does not remedy the program or architectural deficiencies in the building. The second is that inequity between the schools is extremely large**.** The approximate savings: 45-55 percent per school.