

**Montgomery County Council  
of  
Parent Teacher Associations**

**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT  
PROGRAM (CIP)  
GUIDEBOOK  
2010-2011**

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# **The Capital Improvement Program MCCPTA CIP Committee Guide for Cluster Coordinators**

## **Introduction**

The MCCPTA cluster coordinator is recognized by MCCPTA and MCPS as one of the key leadership positions in nurturing parental involvement, addressing educational issues, promoting new program initiatives, and acting as a liaison between local parent groups and MCPS. Foremost among the many responsibilities of the cluster coordinator is to provide advocacy for local schools during the budget process. This may push your leadership skills to the limit, but many people including parents, teachers, principals, and even students, are counting on your ability to raise the right issues in order to get things done.

Budget wise, there are two major components impacting MCPS' ability to provide every child a quality education in a safe and secure learning environment. They are the operating budget and the capital budget. The operating budget consists primarily of salaries for MCPS employees and education program costs. The capital budget pays for new schools, additions, modernizations, and other physical improvements needed to adequately house students at every county school. What follows is an in depth review of the CIP process as well as, a discussion of what a cluster coordinator must do to represent his schools and the people who work and learn in them.

## **The CIP**

The term "CIP" is often used for both the capital improvements program and the annual capital budget. The Capital Improvements Program is the schedule for capital projects that are funded or that have approval for funding in the next six-years (other projects listed may have anticipated completion dates beyond the six-years but no actual funding). July 2010 begins the FY11 funding and starts the FY2011 - 2016 CIP. The program includes the timelines for feasibility studies, new schools, modernizations, or addition project planning and construction funding, in addition to scheduled life cycle maintenance. The CIP document, printed at the end of October, also contains a huge amount of data and information pertaining to all MCPS facilities (such as, current enrollment, elementary school gymnasium completion dates, the number of portables by school and cluster, and a section on each cluster with original building date, enrollment projections, site size, etc. for each school). The CIP is approved on a biennial basis within the context of the six-year program; one year the full CIP is considered, the next year, only amendments. The council has established certain criteria for amendments, but generally they want MCPS to offer only items that it couldn't have known about the year before—so an amendment year usually

includes only a few new items. However, it is still important to make your case and to seek full funding of what had already been put in the budget.

The Superintendent recommends the annual capital budget, the Board approves it, but the County Council funds it. Cluster coordinator testimony and input to all of these parties is an important part of the process. The Capital Budget consists of that year's budget broken down by spending categories.

**The Master Plan**, printed each year in late June, reflects current capital and non-capital actions approved by the County Council for the annual budget. It also includes many of the updated appendices from the CIP. These are important documents to become familiar with for individual cluster capital projects, for county-wide trends, and for current data. Each cluster coordinator/PTA President is sent a copy; schools also have copies; and now they are on-line (call Division of Long-Range Planning for one or for help in navigating it).

**Sources of Funding**- the CIP is funded from county General Obligation Bonds, state aid, and current revenue, in addition to recently added revenue from the increased recordation tax and schools impact tax on new development. The Spending Affordability Guidelines (SAG) set the limit on how much debt the county can afford each year. To override this guideline takes a council supermajority (7 of the 9 members). We have testified in the past in favor of increasing the SAG to allow for more capital funding to offset increased costs due to supplies, fuel, and labor.

The county has an Annual Growth Policy (AGP) this is intended to coordinate development approvals with provisions for county infrastructure- roads and schools. A schools test in the AGP is conducted each year. Every cluster is tested for elementary, middle and high school capacity in the future. If a cluster fails the test at any level, it puts the area into moratorium, which means that subdivisions may not be approved in that area until the cluster passes the AGP test, meaning that additional school capacity is approved with new schools or additions. The schools impact tax is an outgrowth of the AGP and provides a revenue source to fund school construction. The impact tax requires developers to pay a per-dwelling unit fee for each residential unit at the time of issuance of building permits. The AGP was reviewed in 2007 by the County Council. There were a number of changes including changing from an artificial measure of capacity to the MCPS program capacity; tightening the definition of overcrowded; and an increase in the impact tax and schools facility fee.

**CIP versus Operating Budget**- There is a strong relationship between the capital budget and the operating budget. Many CIP projects have operating budget

implications; since new or expanded schools need operating budget funds for staffing or to buy furniture, and for maintenance staffing, equipment, and supplies. Similarly, decisions made during the operating budget process can impact the CIP (e.g., reduced class sizes and full-day Kindergarten increased the space needs of many schools.)

While we think there are two pots of money for the operating and capital budgets (Operating budgets can only be funded using current revenue.), there is still only one major source, the county budget - with education accounting for nearly fifty percent of the entire Montgomery County budget. As residents, we know there are many competing interests for limited dollars but as education advocates we often need to convince not only our Council members of the need to fund our budget or certain projects but our community members as well. Less than twenty-five percent of Montgomery County households have children in public schools, but all use the roads, want adequate fire and police departments, public libraries, snow removal, and health and human services programs. Arguments to support education funding include the fact that people want to live in Montgomery County because it offers a quality education. Residents, especially parents, support the high cost of education, but, merely want funds “well-spent.” The cluster coordinator must highlight the specific needs of his schools, and justify requests for new construction or increased funding.

Available county funding can fluctuate due to current revenue, the political climate, and other budget needs. Increased costs in the construction industry for steel from overseas, petroleum products, and construction labor have increased projects by about twenty percent. MCPS is also very concerned that fuel for bus transportation and heating will strain the operating budget.

To facilitate a common understanding of the process, the Division of Long-Range Planning and MCCPTA CIP Committee jointly hold **two forums** each year to either preview or answer questions on both the Master Plan and the CIP. The Spring forum is held usually in late May, prior to the Master Plan publication and cluster comments; while the Fall forum is scheduled as soon as the CIP is printed. The May forum is a workshop for cluster coordinators to prepare for writing CIP comments.

### **Priorities**

The Board of Education has adopted these CIP priorities as stated in the CIP:

- Critical health and safety projects
- Capacity projects
- Capital maintenance projects
- Modernizations

- Gymnasium projects

MCCPTA has consistently lobbied for all of these needs, while emphasizing the need to **keep the modernization schedule on track** and solutions to overcrowding as countywide priorities. The modernization schedule is set by FACT score rating, and although there are still schools that need to be rated and continue to deteriorate while waiting, we hold this schedule as something not to be altered. (This past year we testified in favor of an evaluation of the remaining unrated schools and in favor of reviewing the FACT formula before rating these schools.) Additionally, new and reopened schools and additions continue to be added to a different schedule as enrollment outgrows other facilities, again needing funds from the same small pot. Individual clusters prioritize and testify based on their schools needs, which vary due to age of schools, location, and other factors specific to their schools. Other county-wide themes have related to health and safety concerns; such as, restroom renovations, lead remediation, and air quality improvements. MCCPTA has long lobbied for more funding for capital maintenance funds, both in the CIP and the operating budget for more supplies and employees to perform the jobs. In our county-wide efforts, the CIP Committee has tried not to weigh one project over another; a new/reopened school to relieve overcrowding/overutilization in one area is just as critical as a modernization/expansion of a school in another area. In fact, the need for both kinds of projects occurs in many areas.

In the past several years, the MCCPTA CIP Committee has used the themes of “Just Build It”- in support of a nearly billion dollar CIP that began to catch up with the capital needs of our schools and also keep up with funding for modernizations, repairs, and aggressive expansion. Five years ago, we focused on “Fix It and Fund It”, with more emphasis on repairs, replacements, and the health and safety issues and the need for state aid. Four years ago we used the theme a variation of “Keep Up With the Schedule” to indicate our need for full funding of scheduled projects and to emphasize the need to keep up ambitious long-range planning and building. We continue to state that our standard is that every child should attend school in a safe, secure modern facility. Projections of increased costs make us aware that anything less than full funding will result in delays of some projects this year and many others in the future. We now advocate for “holding the line.”

### **Cluster Coordinator CIP Responsibilities/Timelines**

**April and May-** Cluster coordinators work with PTA presidents and principals to write Cluster Comments, which are due June 1st. Some clusters have each PTA write an individual letter, while others write one summary highlighting everyone’s needs. Some cluster coordinators meet with principals from each school, while some rely on PTA presidents working with principals to identify needs. Regardless of how it is

done, it is critical to get input from every school in your cluster. Many begin the process with an e-mail to the PTA presidents and principals in early May, before the end of year “rush.” In mid- May MCCPTA offers a Clusters Comments workshop in conjunction with the MCPS Division of Long-Range Planning Staff. The Division of Long-Range Planning sends out a letter with the Cluster Comments format which is also available electronically on the MCCPTA website. Both MCPS and MCCPTA CIP Committee use the comments from each cluster to base new CIP requests on, to identify trends in maintenance needs (such as, restroom renovation), and to reiterate previous requests from the local schools. The MCCPTA CIP committee uses the comments to develop a county-wide theme or focus for the year. Cluster comments should be used to build a record for all of your schools’ current and future needs, including both capital and maintenance.

The Division of Long-Range Planning has developed a format for cluster comments. They ask that requests be organized as follows:

- A. Individual projects (additions, modernizations, new schools);
- B. County-wide projects (maintenance type, including PLAR-planned life cycle replacements, safe access, HVAC, and indoor air quality to name a few categories); and,
- C. Other (such as, lead remediation).

The difference between individual projects and county-wide projects really rests on how MCPS reports the projects in the CIP. Items in A. Individual projects are reported one by one. So while, schools across the county get additions, the projects will still be listed separately—as a separate line item in the CIP. Clusters can still encourage MCPS to increase funding for additions across the county even though the category is called Individual Projects. Likewise, your cluster can ask for funding for a county-wide budget category for your own schools, e.g. ask that it receive an HVAC replacement. The difference is, that MCPS requests a certain amount of money for each county-wide category and then determines which projects should receive part of this funding. The budget documents will not list which schools will receive work in the county-wide categories although MCPS is working on ways to show the queue so schools can see where they are on the backlog list.

Don’t hesitate to make the same request year after year, or point out reoccurring problems that only get partially fixed. Cluster coordinators should keep a file of past comments to refer to throughout the year, and to use as the basis for the next year’s comments. Passing them on to new cluster coordinators really helps. The CIP committee also has many good examples to share with you. Feel free to ask for help.

**Note-** maintenance-type projects differ from purely maintenance requests that should be taken care of with routine work orders and repairs. This type may include repeated repairs to heating and cooling units, roof repairs, mold and other indoor air quality issues. Work orders stem from requests such as, fence mending, new lock or key requests, extermination, or minor painting. Building service managers, principals, or other school staff electronically fill in a work order. The Department of Maintenance logs in the request, and sends out the appropriate repairman. Once completed, the work order is checked off and the cost of time or materials is calculated. These repairs are operating budget expenses. Life-cycle repairs, such as whole school painting or roof replacement are done on a cycle or as needed basis and funds are provided in the CIP.

**June 1** – Cluster Comments and proposals about issues for consideration in the CIP due to the superintendent

**June 30** – Superintendent publishes Educational Facilities Master Plan

**August/September** - Meet with Division of Long-Range Planning and area cluster coordinators to discuss requests, concerns, and likely projects to be included in the CIP.

**October** - MCPS FY 2012 State CIP request to Interagency Committee (IAC) on Public School Construction

**Mid-October** - Enrollment trends and facilities planning issues are presented to the Board of Education (BOE), and superintendent releases recommendations on boundary studies and/or planning studies from spring 2010

**Late October** – MCCPTA CIP Forum; Six- Year Enrollment projections are revised and published; Superintendent publishes Recommendations for the FY 2011-2016 CIP and it's presented to the BOE and public.

**Early November** – Board of Education worksessions on boundary recommendations and the superintendent's recommended CIP amendments; IAC staff recommendations on FY 2012 State CIP

**Mid-November** - Public hearings on FY 2011-2016 CIP and boundary studies begin. Each cluster coordinator testifies before the BOE. In the interest of “strength in numbers”, we ask that you incorporate the MCCPTA theme into your testimony, and illustrate what it means to your cluster. For example, four years ago, we all said, “Just Build It” and then went on to explain it referencing needs for schools in each cluster.

Three years ago the MCCPTA underlying theme was “Every child should go to school in a safe, secure, and modern facility.” We used this theme locally, and in our state funding efforts.

**Late-Nov.** - BOE action on the amended CIP and boundary studies

**Dec-** County Executive’s reviews BOE requested FY 2011-2016 CIP; final revisions on FY 2012 state aid request due to IAC followed by appeal hearing in mid-Dec.

**January** – County Executive’s recommendations for FY 2011-2016; Board of Public Works hearing on FY 2012 State CIP

**February–May** - County Council reviews requested FY 2011-2016 CIP

**February** - State capital improvement funding is announced and debated in Annapolis (lobbying may be needed). Superintendent releases recommendation on winter boundary studies and CIP recommendations for any deferred items and BOE holds work sessions for the same. The County Council Education Committee hold work sessions on the CIP. Council staff assists the committee members with recommendations and data on projects (While the Council says that they do not approve each project; amendments or schedules other than the modernization queue can be altered by them.) Being visible during this time is helpful, and it sometimes takes extensive lobbying to have staff/council members understand a school’s request and rationale. In lean years, visits to individual council members may be needed to support certain projects, particularly amendments. (It never hurts to have your local representatives know you and your schools. Invite Council members, BOE members, and state reps to your schools throughout the year for social events, walkthroughs and PTA meetings.) Seeing the fleet of portables, deteriorating bathrooms, or closed water fountains will reinforce your pleas for capital improvements. Many enjoy being a part of dedication ceremonies, “walk to school day” or will come read to students. While they may be using the opportunity for political means, you should be lobbying for your school needs.)

**Early March** - Council hearings take place on the superintendent’s recommendations for winter boundary studies and any deferred items Cluster coordinators should rewrite the BOE testimony to focus on the Council’s authority to approve appropriations.

**Early May** – Board of Public Works decisions on FY 2012 State CIP

**Late- May** - County Council approves the FY 2011-2016 CIP and the FY 2012 CIP. Then the CIP process begins again for the next year!

### **More Cluster Coordinator Activities**

**Boundary studies-** can be one of the more emotional, difficult processes for communities to go through. The current procedure involving a “boundary committee” has greatly helped to reduce the stress and anxiety. Division of Long-Range Planning staff leads the committee, with participation from the school community members. Cluster coordinators are often non-voting members of the committee to offer counsel and advice to representatives from each school. Committee members define the criteria for options, discuss and evaluate specifics, and become liaisons to schools and communities. Public meetings are also held to hear the views of other community members. Committee members evaluate final options, and PTA’s write position papers to be included in the boundary study report. Dr. Weast reviews all of the information provided, and makes a recommendation to the County Council. The community, and PTAs, may testify in favor of, or against, the superintendent’s recommendation at the November CIP hearings, Board action is made in late November. Any boundary study testimony offered by cluster coordinators should be objective and unbiased, unless there is unanimous agreement by the communities and PTAs in the cluster.

**Feasibility studies/planning committees:** Set up with the Dept. of Planning and Capital Programming and Facilities Management (Planning or Construction) staff, the architect, and the Principal, and PTA leadership involving staff, students (if appropriate) and community members. Feasibility studies are structured meetings to create criteria, review options, and evaluate proposals for future projects. Similar to boundary studies, there are both small committee meetings and community meetings. Feasibility studies for additions may include an evaluation of actual number of new rooms needed, including core space, and other capital projects the school may need, such as, HVAC repair/replacement. Architectural planning committees are similar but work on the design phase of the now approved project, following educational specifications to review design elements and options (color scheme for tiles, window placement, or location of specialized rooms). Cluster coordinators are usually not be involved in routine school planning committees, since the local PTA will provide the parent leadership. Cluster coordinators are often committee members at the high school level, and serve as the PTA leadership for new/reopened schools.

### **Policy FAA- Long Range Educational Facilities Planning Policy and Regulations FAA-RA**

This policy is the structure for all facilities planning, procedures, project scheduling, and the basis for school enrollment size, school utilization levels, and school site size.

The 2006 revision generalized the policy to “principles” and the regulations includes all the detailed guidelines for actual processes. The policy and regulation are printed each year in the CIP book and the BOE has stated that comments on any changes in the regulation should be made during cluster CIP testimony. Possible changes (which could be made any year) include: change to capacity calculations; change to optimal enrollment at each school level; change to optimal school site size, etc. It is important to keep track of changes in FAA-RA.

### **Resources**

The Division of Long-Range Planning staff is willing and knowledgeable and can assist you on obtaining data, understanding processes, explaining projects. They will come to cluster or PTA meetings to discuss projections, enrollment, facilities issues, and any other CIP subject. 240-314- 4700

[www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/planning](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/planning)

The MCCPTA CIP committee can provide electronic copies of past documents, provide advice on CIP strategies, and offer knowledge of many procedures and past history.

The MCCPTA Board of Directors and other cluster coordinators can provide background knowledge on areas of concern, MCPS, the BOE and county council.