

THE NORTHEAST CONSORTIUM

A Consortium of the Blake, Paint Branch and Springbrook Clusters

Comments on the FY 2011 Capital Budget and the FY 2011-2016 Capital
Improvements Program

On behalf of The NEC Middle Schools

February 16, 2010

Good evening President Floreen and members of the Council. I am Lee Ann Doerflinger, Blake Cluster Coordinator, and I am here this evening to speak on behalf of the five middle schools of the Northeast Consortium: Briggs Chaney, White Oak, Francis Scott Key, Benjamin Banneker, and William Farquhar, which we share with the Sherwood cluster.

The clusters of the Northeast Consortium fully support the MCCPTA Resolution on the FY 2011 Capital Improvement Program Budget and FY2011-2016 CIP and the MCCPTA Resolution on the Restroom Renovation Project in the FY 2011-2016 Capital Improvement Program. We also fully support the testimony of MCCPTA president Kay Romero.

Key Middle School has just been modernized and has reopened in its new building: the Consortium community is very grateful for this beautiful new school. Much work remains to be done in the middle schools of the Consortium however. Benjamin Banneker was built in the mid-1970s as an "open" school which means that the building was not meant to have internal walls separating classrooms. Banneker has adapted to changing thinking and has created classrooms out of the existing space, but this has led to strange traffic patterns and odd configurations, such as having to pass through one classroom to get to another. Relocatable classrooms serve only as a temporary solution to the problem as they have their own challenges of maintenance, air quality and security.

White Oak and Briggs Chaney have been recommended for restroom renovations. Unfortunately, following the recommended schedule would mean that White Oak's renovation would occur during the 2013-14 school year and Brigg Chaney's in 2014-15. In view of this year's flu epidemic, it would seem that this is totally inadequate. Comments from Briggs Chaney indicate that keeping enough soap in the bathrooms has been a major problem: soap is the first line of defense in preventing the spread of the flu virus. Improving soap dispensers four years from now is not going to help with our current problem. In general MCCPTA would like to see the restroom renovation program speeded up, as restrooms are deteriorating much more quickly than they are being repaired.

Farquhar Middle School, which sends students to both the Northeast Consortium and Sherwood High School, is deeply concerned about the traffic patterns and access to the school. Batchellors Forest Road

is very narrow and unlit and because of its status as a “rustic road”, an historic preservation designation those conditions will not change. Despite being a “rustic road”, there has been development on this road in the last few years which has increased traffic flow, making access to the school even more difficult and dangerous. Farquhar is programmed for modernization with completion in August of 2015 according to the Superintendent’s Recommended FY 2011 Capital Budget and FY 2011-2016 Capital Improvements Program (page 4-73) but the traffic safety issues should be addressed sooner. The CIP does not fund the Improved (Safe) Access to Schools project after FY 2012: in view of the problems with access at Farquhar, it would seem that this project still has work to do and we would like to see it continued past 2012.

Clearly, capital improvement projects and maintenance projects, which fall under the operating budget, can overlap or at least bump up against each other. It is sometimes difficult for us as parents to discern which category a particular project falls under or why certain projects are scheduled for completion earlier than others. A full examination of the process of assigning FACT scores should have the involvement of all the stakeholders, including parents and community members. Greater parental and community participation in these decisions, as well as more transparency in the reasoning behind them, could save us all a lot of time and, potentially, money.

We understand that the County budget is very tight this year and will be for several years to come. For this reason, it is important that the funds we do have are used to maximum advantage in the county-wide projects that affect the health and safety of our students, and that they optimize the educational environments in which they learn.

Thank you.

The Northeast Consortium Cluster Coordinators

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