
AN UPDATE: REVIEW OF LWVFA SCHOOLS POSITIONS – Part 2

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At the 2006 LWVFA annual meeting, members approved a review and update of the League's positions on schools to reflect the current situation in Fairfax County/City. Last year, a committee prepared information on the topics covered by half of the schools positions. Members discussed and reached concurrence on revised positions in June 2007. This study provides material for use as a review of positions on school facilities, fees, book and materials selection, and transportation. Proposed revised positions for member concurrence are printed elsewhere in this Voter. Readers of this study should note that many issues discussed herein are matters under FCPS School Board and public discussion at the time of publication.²

POLICIES IN PLACE FOR FACILITIES PLANNING³

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) School Board policy 8120.1 prescribes the steps to be followed in school facilities planning. It assigns responsibility for developing educational specifications for facilities to the Superintendent and the Departments of Instructional Services, Special Services, and Facilities and Transportation Services. The same document sets the requirements for the preparation and annual updating of the five-year capital improvement program (CIP); addresses school capacity and size; requires the periodic adjustment of school boundaries; and encourages public involvement in the planning process. In Fairfax City, the School Board is responsible for the City's school facilities--two elementary, one middle school and one high school--although FCPS manages and operates the schools under a contract with the City. In areas other than facilities, FCPS policies and procedures apply to both County and City schools and students.

Facilities Design⁴

School design must support the instructional program. Those responsible for facilities design meet periodically with principals, information technology and instructional staffs, and consultants to review educational specifications and recommend changes based on current approved educational programs. Approved changes are incorporated into new educational specifications and dictate the design of future new construction and renewal projects. Significant changes in design have occurred, due especially to changes in the program of studies in the 1990s, changing technology,

environmental concerns, and the growth in the number of special education students served. In planning and designing its school facilities, Fairfax City follows both FCPS and Virginia standards.

FCPS facilities planning emphasizes the design of more flexible and multi-use spaces for multiple programs and increased space utilization. Movable partitions help accommodate programmatic and population changes within current facilities and provide a greater opportunity for using the space for non-instructional uses. A study was contracted to review the methodologies and practices used to determine capacities and educational specifications, and FCPS plans to implement its recommendations.⁵

FCPS is a member of the (California-based) Collaborative for High Performance Schools and uses, to the extent appropriate for our area, its sustainable criteria and best practices to facilitate the design of high performance schools. Low emission paints and adhesives will be used to maintain good air quality, and construction waste materials will be separated and recycled. FCPS is trying to cut energy consumption by 10-15% by using low impact design methods, drought resistant and maintenance-free landscaping, highly reflective roofing, high efficiency heating, ventilation and air conditioning, low water flow fixtures, and use of natural lighting

Many residents are concerned about the use of portable classrooms (trailers); 788 were in use as of September 2007. However, they are a cost effective means of addressing the more short-term increases in school enrollment. FCPS hopes to reduce the number by means such as converting support and resource areas to instructional space and, when

indicated, using modular classroom additions. Nobody we spoke with believed that FCPS would ever consider double-shifts, nor does it appear that such a step would be needed absent a major disaster. And one staff member noted that current traffic levels preclude double-shifts anyway.

Facilities Planning and Coordination⁶

Each year, FCPS develops a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that addresses the system's facilities needs for the next five years. The CIP is a five-year plan that covers requirements for new facilities, renovations, infrastructure management [maintenance], technology upgrades, and other facility-related needs. The CIP, presented in December each year, is the culmination of an on-going process of information gathering, analysis, consultation, and evaluation of the facilities needed to "ensure the efficient and effective accommodation of [some 167,000] students, and their educational programs."⁷

The CIP includes recommendations and alternatives regarding timing, location, costs and savings associated with new school building requirements; renewal of existing facilities; and alternative or discontinued use of school buildings. The recommendations are supported by five-year and long-term student membership projections, program capacity analyses, special program space requirements, financial and transportation analyses, economic and housing projections on both a county-wide and school level, and assessment of physical aspects of the properties and the need for their use as education facilities. The process helps identify capacity shortages and surpluses, leading to recommendations to resolve imbalances, such as boundary changes.

The CIP that is developed for presentation by the Superintendent to the School Board in December is based on September 30 enrollments. Enrollment figures are checked against updated numbers later in the school year, and development projects are reviewed in both spring and fall each year. Continuous input into the program is provided by tracking and reviewing the County's zoning actions and plans and monitoring major proposed changes such as in the Tysons Corner and Fort Belvoir areas.

With the slowing of enrollment growth in FCPS, only a few totally new facilities are included in the current CIP: new elementary schools at Coppermine, Laurel Hill, and a replacement for the Lacey site (Annandale), a middle school in South County, and a Dulles area high school. Approximately two-thirds of the \$771.8 million in the CIP

is projected for renovation of existing school facilities. This reflects the age of FCPS facilities and its plan to carry out renovations on a 25-year cycle. Previously, the renovation of high schools had been emphasized at the expense of elementary school renovation, which resulted in a cycle closer to 45 years for these schools. The current CIP modifies the renovation schedule to eliminate the disparity between the levels.

The Fairfax City School Board is responsible for its annual school CIP, and any construction, renovation and major maintenance is included in its budget. The major components at this time are major maintenance and technology because other construction needs have recently been met. The remaining work at Lanier Middle School should be completed by March 2008.

Community Involvement

FCPS policy encourages community involvement. "During appropriate stages of the planning and review of construction projects, the School Board and the school staff shall provide an opportunity for and shall encourage public involvement."⁸

CIP: Once the Superintendent transmits each year's proposed CIP to the School Board, it holds public work sessions and hearings prior to its adoption and transmittal to the Fairfax County Office of Comprehensive Planning for incorporation in the County's CIP. Superintendent Dale presented the proposed CIP for 2009-13 to the School Board by on December 20, 2007. Sixty-five speakers appeared at a public hearing on the CIP held on January 9. Five days later, the school board held a work session, and approved the CIP on January 24. In 2007, the public hearing on the proposed CIP was held January 16, the work session was held January 22, and the CIP was approved three days later.

School Boundary Studies: The Code of Virginia (22.1-79) states that school boards shall "Provide for the consolidation of schools or redistricting of school boundaries or adopt pupil assignment plans whenever such procedure will contribute to the efficiency of the school division." The Code also requires school boards to "obtain public comment through a public hearing not less than 10 days after reasonable notice to the public in a newspaper of general circulation in the school district prior to providing . . . for redistricting of school boundaries or adopting any pupil assignment plan affecting the assignment of 15 percent or more of the pupils in average daily membership in the affected school."

FCPS is conducting two boundary studies during the 2007-08 school year. The first deals with Springfield Estates and Forestdale Elementary Schools. Five persons attended a community town meeting that was held on November 28, 2007. The second study deals with Chantilly, Herndon, Westfield, Oakton, and South Lakes High Schools, as well as the Madison High School attendance “island” north of the Dulles Airport Access Road and its feeder schools. The table below shows the locations, dates and volume of comments (as of early January) resulting from of these meetings:

**West County Boundary Study
Town Meeting Information**

Location	Date	Meeting Notes	Online submissions
Chantilly High School	Nov. 12, 2007	152 pages	
Westfield High School	Dec. 3, 2007	269 pages	807 pages
Oakton High School	Dec. 19, 2007	146 pages	640 pages

Due to high community interest and demand to speak at a public hearing on the boundary changes, the school board scheduled three public hearings--January 30 and 31 and February 9. Following the public hearings, a School Board work session was scheduled for February 11 and Board action scheduled for February 28, 2008.

Individual Construction Projects:⁹ The FCPS Facilities Planning office, working primarily through the principal of the school involved, notifies neighborhoods of anticipated construction projects and describes the project and the anticipated time that it will take. It contacts adjacent landowners and homeowners associations by mail. The office recommends that each affected school establish a design committee composed of teachers, the PTA and the community. Periodic updates are provided for the community, chiefly through community newsletters. The effectiveness of community involvement in individual facilities planning and construction depends upon the principal working with the community.

In 1996, the Fairfax City School Board appointed a task force to study and review elementary school needs. As a result of its report and subsequent bond referendum, two elementary schools were closed and the remaining two were enlarged and renovated. A bond referendum also allowed the renovation and enlargement of Lanier Middle School

and Fairfax High School. During the past decade, the City School Board appointed a Schools Facilities Committee, an Elementary School Task Force, and school bond and other committees. One LWVFA member recalls “the school board and the task forces having several neighborhood meetings to keep people informed about the progress and to get their ideas about what was being planned for the new schools. I was impressed with the amount of information and the attention they paid to the desires of the citizens.” No facilities advisory committee currently exists; no major renovations are needed in the near future.

COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOLS ENCOURAGED

The FCPS School Board encourages the use of school buildings and grounds by the community for educational, recreational, civic, and cultural activities. “The Board believes that school facilities are an important resource in developing and sustaining lifelong learning, in promoting intergovernmental cooperation, and in encouraging citizen participation in community activities. When space is available at times that do not interfere with Fairfax County Public Schools instructional programs, student activities, activities of school related groups, and Fairfax County Department of Recreation and Community Services, community members may reserve school facilities.”

Each user fills out an application along with a \$10 application fee. A part of this fee is given to the school for the principal’s discretionary fund and the rest goes to the school systems’ general fund. Rental fees are based on the type of facility (elementary, middle or high school), type of space required (field, parking lot, cafeteria, classroom, gym, etc.) the length of time the facility is to be used, and vary by the site and equipment needed (which includes microphones or pianos, lighting of fields, and heating or air-conditioning). Personnel fees are assessed in cases when school personnel, such as custodians, cafeteria worker, technicians etc, are required to work. School officials are concerned about the handling of emergencies when responsible school staff is not present. Each type of contract is detailed in the School Board’s policies, bylaws and regulations.

Community use can take many forms, including recreational activities. Over 500 school gyms and sports fields are scheduled for community use by the Fairfax County Department of Recreation and Community Services. All sports camps and clinics and adult leagues are scheduled in the same way. The athletic organizations, FCPS, and Fairfax County Community and Recreation Services have a “Friend of the Field” program to provide facility improvement and maintenance.

Approximately 95 religious and cultural organizations have long-term contracts with the school system. Each group must show proof of non-profit status and abide by the school policies. These organizations include homeowners groups, school business partners, booster clubs, PTA fundraisers, before and after school tutoring, adult education, polling places, summer camps, and quilters. Some activities are prohibited, such as those involving drugs, alcohol or firearms. A recent request for a dog show was denied since only service dogs are allowed in the schools.

Amy Craig, Coordinator of the Community Use Section, was pleased to say that FC Direct will soon be online so that user applications and school building reservations will be made easier. The system will work like hotel reservations with facility, dates, time, and space availability shown immediately.¹⁰

Fairfax City follows the same policies as FCPS, and its school facilities are used extensively by the community for sports, community and neighborhood meetings, and cultural activities. As noted in a cooperative agreement between the City and the School Board with regard to school facilities, “The City of Fairfax School Board . . . encourages the maximum use of City school buildings and

grounds consistent with the educational requirements of each facility.” The agreement also provides for joint planning by the schools and the Parks and Recreation Department.

CHARGING FEES RESTRICTED BY LAW¹¹

The Code of Virginia (Sec. 22.1-6) restricts school divisions from charging any fees not allowed under the Code or regulations of the Virginia Board of Education. During school year 2007-08, per Notice 5922, FCPS could charge fees for the following: musical instruments; student parking; career and technical education certification tests; business and information technology (lab books); fine arts materials (art, music, theater and dance); health and medical sciences (lab coats/uniforms and liability insurance); family and consumer sciences (materials, uniforms, course fees); trade and industrial (uniforms, lab fees/books, kits); technology education materials; preschool and kindergarten snack and food activities; middle school exploratory wheel (elective courses, not exploratory courses); towel service; items such as PE uniforms, heart monitor straps, recorders, electronic storage devices, assignment books, scholastic magazines; applicant processing and admission fees for Thomas Jefferson HS for Science and Technology; and returned checks.

What Are Community Schools?

According to the Gardner Center at Stanford University, “Community schools are K-12 public schools that combine the rigorous academics associated with high quality instructional environments with a wide range of vital in-house services, supports, and opportunities that promote children’s learning and development. Supports range from medical and mental health services to extended day and weekend activities, such as sports, homework assistance centers, and computer enrichment clubs.”

With the knowledge that the 50+-year-old Graham Road Elementary School (GRES) was to be renovated in several years, a planning committee was established to see if a community school concept would fit GRES. The school is located in a diverse community, with most students living in a large town home community located adjacent to the school. Almost half of the students speak English as a second or third language, and about 75 percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch. The ethnically diverse student body has met all performance standards with support from Title I grants for several special teachers and after-school enrichment activities. The committee explored the possibility of offering a range of supports and opportunities to serve children, youth, families, and communities – before, during and after school, often open six or seven days a week. Their recommendations included providing on-site services such as: a full time social worker on site, family counseling, vision and dental screenings, and a qualified health care practitioner. The renovations to the school would include several multipurpose and smaller consultation rooms to accommodate the additional services.

GRES has run into problems with the implementation of these plans, chiefly due to its small size. The school site is considered too small and additional property may have to be purchased. Some are advocating moving the school to the Devonshire Administrative Center site, less than a mile away. Others feel that having to bus students to a site not in the school community defeats the purpose of a “community school”. Another problem is that the school system won’t commit to designing and building community use rooms until the County commits to paying for the personnel to provide the services, while the County won’t commit funds for personnel until the site is built. Despite efforts to work through these problems, it is likely that another school might be the first FCPS “community school.”

The Superintendent's proposed budget for FY 2009 included additional revenue from a new \$50 activity fee for middle and high school students. However, subsequent proposals that this fee be replaced with a fee for high school student participation in only Virginia High School League activities would require a higher fee to provide the same budget savings. Another fee being resurrected and proposed for the upcoming school year is an \$85 charge for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate tests. This fee had been eliminated in 2005, resulting in an increase in the number of students who took the tests. The Instructional Services office believes that the number of participants will not diminish very much if the fee is re-imposed. The budget also included proposals for charging a fee for the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) test.

None of the fees, including those newly proposed in the 2009 budget, would be charged to students receiving free or reduced-price lunches. Further, FCPS is often restrained from actually collecting the above fees by the mechanics of the process. Not all families cooperate, and a student's report card and diploma can't be withheld because of nonpayment.

When the LWVFA studied school fees in the past, there was some talk of charging textbook fees due to budget problems. Everyone associated with FCPS whom we contacted in this regard agreed that FCPS does not, and most likely will never, charge for textbooks.

BOOK MATERIALS SELECTION REFLECT DIVERSITY¹²

The Virginia Constitution and Code authorize the Virginia Board of Education to approve books and materials used in all public schools. The state board adopts a multiple list of textbooks and materials applicable to subject and grade level use. The choices are based on recommendations made by review committees composed of teachers, supervisors, and principals from across the state. The lists are then sent to school divisions for local school board final selection. The Virginia Code also provides that any school board may use textbooks not approved by the state board as long as it selects books in accordance with state board regulations (8 VAC 20-230-30). Under regulation 8 VAC 20-170-10, the Virginia Board of Education places the responsibility for selection, approval, and utilization of instructional materials with local school boards.

The FCPS procedures for adoption of instructional materials include the appointment of a review committee to review

and recommend materials. The committee, composed of teachers, school-based administrators and community members, shall "promote community involvement in the basal materials adoption process; reflect the pluralism and diversity of the population of Fairfax County; and reflect the variation among schools with respect to demographic characteristics, grade level, and school size." (R 3004.2)

The committee's recommendations are submitted to the FCPS School Board along with the Superintendent's, if any. Following transmittal of the recommendations, the materials are available for public review for at least a month. Parents usually find out about textbook adoptions through teachers and PTAs. In addition, recommended materials are placed on display at regional public libraries and at a large annual FCPS event scheduled for this purpose. The new Director of Instructional Services is considering replacing this meeting with four regional "big events" that would include an opportunity to review instructional materials. Certain subject areas and grade levels review new books on a rotating basis approximately every five years.

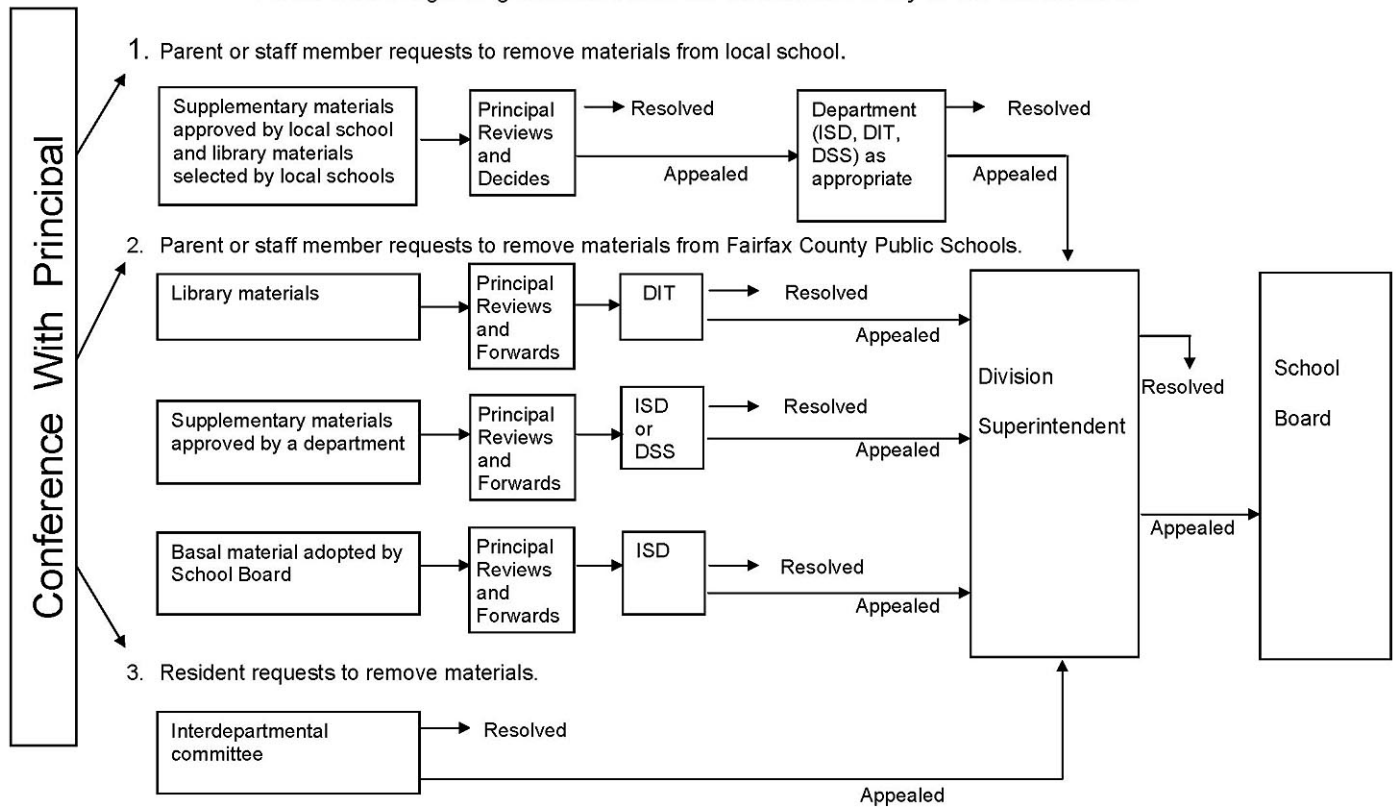
Another FCPS regulation (3005.5) establishes the approval process for assigned required reading of novels and non-fiction books, which takes place at either the departmental office or school level. In each instance, teachers must read the materials beforehand and provide alternative readings if a student or parent objects to content in the assigned material. Parents are notified of the required reading of novels in advance. The selection of books for independent reading is the responsibility of the student and his/her parents.

The procedure for the selection of library books and materials in the school media centers is much less stringent. The school library media specialist is responsible for selecting materials that must meet several guidelines, including support of the curriculum and the reading interests of the students. School Board regulation 6760.1 establishes the criteria for selection.

If parents are concerned about a particular book or materials selection for either the classroom or the library/media center, they are asked to contact the teacher and principal first, explaining their concern. If the matter is not resolved at that level, they can follow a challenge process through many levels, with the decision ultimately left to the School Board. The process is described in School Board regulation R3009.8, and available on the FCPS web site, is summarized in the chart below. Between January 2000 and July 2006, only nine books were submitted to the Board for decision. Of these, the Board upheld the staff decision to deny the challenge in seven cases and modified grade level use for

Challenged Material Review and Appeal Process

All concerns regarding materials shall be discussed initially at the school level.



two.

**TRANSPORTATION POLICIES:
A COMPLEX CHALLENGE¹³**

Student Automobile Use

Although the FCPS School Board has adopted policies and regulations (P 2630.2; R 2630.3) governing the use and parking of automobiles by high school students on school premises, each school and center is responsible for drafting its own rules and administering student parking within the stated parameters. The Board’s policy states that: “The School Board provides school bus transportation for students who live beyond established walking distances to schools; therefore the use of private motor vehicles by high school students in driving to and from school is strongly discouraged.” The most effective factor in discouraging driving is the limited parking available on school property. It is also the factor determining most individual school policies.

application form to be submitted by a parent of each student driver applicant and approval on the basis of established justifications such as participation in a school-approved work-study program, or before- or after-school programs requiring transportation not provided by school bus. According to the Board’s policy, “applications must be justified on a basis other than the student’s desire or convenience.” The regulations require the purchase and display of a permit on student-operated automobiles that have been approved. The cost of the permit is established on a system-wide basis each year. The annual parking fee is \$150 for the 2007-08 school year. The amount is reduced for those students entering later in the school year and for those receiving reduced-price and free lunches. Students are urged to carpool and may jointly purchase a parking permit.

Although each school or center establishes its own rules governing student parking on school grounds, a brief survey of school websites shows that they are similar in their policy statements and establishment of priorities, limitations on access to automobiles during the school day, and establishment of rules and penalties for violating them.

System-wide regulations require use of a standard

When the League last looked at this issue, there was concern

about the impact on the neighborhoods of students who drove to school and parked on the streets surrounding the high school. This no longer appears to be a significant problem. Complaints have decreased over the years, possibly because schools have increased the number of assigned spaces or because the schools and community have improved communications about parking guidelines. For example, Chantilly High School asks that students not park in the parking lots of several nearby areas, noting that they are regularly patrolled and vehicles are ticketed and/or towed.

The number of students, especially elementary students, who are being driven to school has increased, even though many live within walking distance. This causes traffic congestion in the kiss and ride areas of the school parking lots and the streets near the schools. It can cause some students to be late for school; more importantly, it is a growing safety issue. School administrators use parent orientations, PTA meetings, and the school newsletters to persuade parents to let walkers walk to school and those who live beyond walking distance to take the school bus.

School Bus Transportation and Walking Routes

The Code of Virginia (§22.1-70, 22.1-78, 22.1-181) and regulations (8 VAC 20-70-160) prescribe the services which must be provided and the parameters which school districts must follow for student transportation. FCPS School Board policy and regulations (P7101.5 and R7103.5) comply with the Code.

FCPS students may be required to walk to school or bus stops up to 1 mile away for elementary students and up to 1.5 miles away for secondary students. Parents are responsible for selecting and supervising, if needed, their children's walking routes to and from bus stops, schools, and home. FCPS provides free daily bus service to school for students who live in excess of these distances. Bus routes are established to deliver students to designated loading and unloading locations. FCPS does provide door-to-door service for designated students (for example, some special education students) who require it. The Code of Virginia, §46.2-893 and 46.2-918, requires that buses be routed so that pupils will be picked up and discharged on the side of the road on which they live when there is a dual highway divided by a physical barrier, an unpaved area, or five lane highway with a turning lane. Students living within the mileage limitations can receive transportation services if unusual hazards like poor walking surface or visibility

and street crossings make walking to school unsafe. If parents dispute the safe walking distance, they may appeal to the Superintendent who may consult the Department of Facilities and Transportation Services, the School Safety Section and the Police Department, as needed. FCPS is not required to provide transportation for those students who are the subjects of student disciplinary action, but often does to keep those students in school. Under the proposed FY 2009 budget, transportation of administratively placed students, excluding those with an Individualized Education Program, would be eliminated. Under the proposal, if a student is administratively placed, transportation will be the responsibility of the parents.

School bus management, scheduling and budgeting¹⁴

Dean Tistadt is the Chief Operating Officer of the FCPS Facilities and Transportation Department, which consists of six offices, including Transportation Services headed by Linda Farbry. Transportation is divided into three geographical areas and special education, which provides services to students across the County. Each area has a coordinator, two assistant coordinators, transportation supervisors, bus driver supervisors, bus drivers and attendants. In total, Transportation Services employs 1802 people of which 1200 are bus drivers, 437 are bus attendants for special needs students, 107 are supervisors, and 14 are instructors. The remaining positions are administrative. Linda Farbry noted that the clerical, supervisory, and management staff are adequate in the three general education areas, each of which oversees 300 to 350 buses, drivers, and attendants. The special education transportation office, beset by problems of program growth and ill-placed program sites, is grossly overwhelmed, according to Ms. Farbry. That office must communicate with each student, individually, to properly provide for the student's needs. Although they have only 300 buses, there are 620 employees, with the same sized clerical staff and only one more manager than general education transportation areas. A forthcoming initiative will be to break-up that office and merge the pieces in some way with the general education offices, which will require some additional management and space additions and revisions.

Routing and scheduling school buses is an extremely complex process that cannot be fully automated given today's technology. FCPS uses MapNet, a program that combines four different databases: students, drivers, vehicles, and maps. While it provides a graphical image of the location of students' residences and develops possible bus routes and stop locations, it is not robust enough to handle the more complex tasks associated with transportation routing and

coordination, such as buses that have difficulty making left turns onto busy streets. Another deficiency is that only one speed can be programmed on a given road, when in reality the bus might be traveling significantly slower in morning rush hour and much faster in the afternoon. Only 50 – 75% of the routes generated by MapNet for the general education population are correct, and all routes need to be reviewed by staff before being implemented. Routes are further complicated by the need to transport students to special programs, such as Gifted and Talented Centers and Thomas Jefferson High School.

In recent years, FCPS has budgeted for new and replacement buses by using a lease-purchase mechanism. It was determined that this budget technique would result in fewer budget cuts than outright purchase and attempts to build up a reserve fund, which might not get funded. The FCPS FY 2009 proposed budget includes funds for the payments for FY 2005-2008 lease/purchases and for the lease/purchase of 95 replacement buses. The proposed budget is less than the FY 2008 budget and will maintain the average age of the bus fleet at 6.6 years. There are 1600 buses in the fleet, of which 251 are spare buses. FCPS has a policy of replacing buses every twelve years. There are a substantial number of buses that are 13-19 years old. According to Linda Farbry, FCPS has “made significant strides in improving the gap in the past few years, but as the cost increases and we can purchase fewer at a time, it may be some time before we get up to policy.”

Some current issues regarding school buses are a shortage of drivers and places to park the buses. Although the shortage of bus drivers was alleviated somewhat by increasing the driver’s pay, the proposed budget would cut back on the new bus driver hiring bonuses. Other than three large parking facilities that can accommodate approximately 600 buses, the buses are parked at schools, public parking lots, public streets, and at drivers’ homes. Lack of security and complaints from residents when buses are parked in the neighborhoods are problematic.

Transportation Task Force

A Transportation Task Force (TTF) was created by the FCPS School Board in September 2007 to provide recommendations on (1) re-engineering the FCPS transportation system and (2) changing school start times, focusing on the possibility of later start times for high schools. The task force consists of 68 people representing a cross section of the community: parents, students, teachers, principals, school program specialists, and coaches, as well as representatives from the Park Authority, police, Athletic Council, Girl Scouts, Boy

Scouts, PTA, School Age Child Care, Federation of Citizens Association, and Chambers of Commerce.

FCPS buses run nominally on a 3-tier schedule with high school transportation first, middle and some elementary schools second, and elementary and the remaining middle schools third. One TTF subcommittee considered the “slide”—moving all start and end times later equally; another looked at the “flip”—putting high schools on the second or third tier, and flipping the schools on that tier to the first tier. A third subcommittee examined how to “tweak” the system and looked at Transportation Department efficiencies, transportation of students to out-of-boundary schools, alternative transportation methods, and the FCPS consortia plan which would group high schools together to eliminate the duplication of specialized course offerings. TTF then set the service parameters under which it believes a re-engineered transportation system ought to operate, including walking distances, placement of bus stops, grandfathering, etc. TTF decided that the slide and flip were not beneficial changes to the school start times so five new possible bell schedules were proposed. As of January 22, 2008, TTF was still considering how these schedules would affect the students, FCPS employees, and the community. A TTF final report listing the service parameters, preferred bell schedule, and other suggested “tweaks” is expected to

ENDNOTES AND SOURCES

1. The committee thanks Janice Miller, Chairman of the Fairfax City School Board, and Jeanne Agee, Chair of the LWVFA Fairfax Day unit, for their contributions to this study.
2. A significant portion of the information in this study was obtained through the FCPS web site: www.fcps.edu. This includes sections on the proposed 2009-13 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), FY 2009 Proposed Budget, School Board policies and regulations, and individual school web sites. Individual attribution will not be provided. We also consulted the Fairfax City Web site: www.fairfaxva.gov, the Code of Virginia, and the Virginia Board of Education web site: www.pen.k12.va.us.
3. Some of the material in this section is based on a discussion with Dean Tistadt, Chief Operating Officer of FCPS Facilities and Transportation Services.
4. Some of the material in this section is based on a discussion with Kevin Sneed, Director of FCPS Design and Construction Services.
5. Proposed CIP for 2009-13.
6. Some of the material in this section is based on discussions with Kevin Sneed and Denise James, Director of FCPS Facilities Planning Services.
7. Taken from the mission statement of the FCPS Facilities Planning Services.
8. School Board policy P-8120.
9. Based on a discussion with Kevin Sneed.
10. Telephone conversation with Amy Craig, November 2007.
11. Some of the material in this section is based on a telephone conversation with Sheila Houston in the FCPS Office of Budget Services.
12. Some of the material in this section is based on a discussion with Peter Noonan, FCPS Director of Instructional Services and an e-mail from Elisabeth Edwards, FCPS library program specialist.
13. Some of the material in this section reflects a discussion with Linda Farbry, FCPS Transportation Director, an e-mail from Jane Dreyfuss, Director of Cluster VIII, FCPS, and a presentation to the Criminal Justice Advisory Board, Fred Ellis, Director of the FCPS Office of Safety and Security.
14. Some of the information in this section was provided in a January 25 e-mail from Linda Farbry.

For Concurrence, March 2008 . . .

Proposed Schools Positions: Part 2

Facilities

Community Involvement: The LWVFA supports a policy that encourages and provides for citizen involvement in all aspects of school construction, redistricting of school boundaries, consolidations, closings and subsequent alternate use. Adequate background materials and time must be provided for widespread community discussion and public comment at every step of the decision-making process. (1)

Planning and design: The LWVFA supports: flexibility in school design to meet the changing needs of school programs and the community; long-range planning and follow-up to minimize overcrowding or underutilization of public school facilities; and coordination with other governmental agencies. Specifically, the LWVFA supports: (2)

- The construction or provision of facilities that are functional and flexible to meet present and future instructional requirements, suitable for wide community use, technologically up-to-date, economical, environmentally responsible, and energy efficient. (3)
- Making available generally comparable facilities for all public school children. (4)
- Close cooperation and coordination between the school boards of Fairfax County and City and between the school boards and those divisions of government responsible for land use planning, fiscal planning, recreation, parks, libraries and public health and safety to prevent duplication, make the best use of public funds, and help provide for the safety of the school community. (5)

Community Use: The LWVFA supports using space in school facilities for other education and community purposes that do not disrupt the basic educational program of the school and are appropriate to the school, community and site. The LWVFA supports the concept of community schools and flexibility in school design so that optimum use can be made of all public school facilities. (6)

Fees

The LWVFA opposes the charging of textbook rental and other instructional materials fees by FCPS. If school budget constraints require the imposition of some activity fees in order to maintain the basic school program, it would not oppose charging legally permissible fees if adequate provisions are made to provide for and encourage the

participation in extracurricular activities by those unable to pay the fee. (7)

Books and Other Materials

The LWVFA believes that the goal of FCPS policies and procedures for selecting books and other materials for use in classrooms and school media centers should be to support and enhance the instructional program. (8)

The LWVFA believes that there should be a clearly defined efficient process for questioning FCPS books and materials selections and resolving challenges equitably and in a timely manner, while protecting the quality of education and the breadth of materials available to students. The challenge procedures should be communicated widely and easily available to parents and the school community. (9)

The LWVFA believes that both instructional materials selection and challenge procedures should include the participation of school professionals, parents and other residents of Fairfax County/City. (10)

Transportation Policies and Management

The LWVFA believes that the FCPS should:

- Adopt measures to discourage student auto usage and encourage students within the walking distance to walk, bicycle or use public transportation to and from school. (11)
- Support the development of safe walking routes for students to their assigned schools. (12)
- Adopt measures and schedules to encourage students who live beyond the maximum walking-distance to use school buses or public transportation. (13)

We believe that the maximum walking distance should be one mile for elementary school students and one-and one-half miles for secondary students. (14)

The LWVFA also believes that FCPS should:

- Provide the necessary funding, facilities, computerized scheduling capability, and staff support to plan, maintain and operate an efficient, safe and environmentally responsible school bus fleet. (15)
- Consistently analyze needs, scheduling flexibility, equipment, routing, age and uses of school buses. (16)