

# REVIEW OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE’S RECOMMENDED FY25 CAPITAL BUDGET AND FY25-30 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM – MCPS



## Description

Montgomery Planning Staff annually reviews the County Executive’s Recommended Capital Budget and Capital Improvements Program for MCPS in comparison to the Board of Education’s Request, and prepares comments to be transmitted to the Council’s Education and Culture Committee.

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## SUMMARY

- The County Executive’s Recommended FY25-30 CIP for MCPS is \$91.8 million short of the Board of Education (BOE)’s Request for the six-year total. In the first two years of the CIP especially, the Executive’s recommended funding level falls short of even reaching the expenditures of individual capital projects in construction stage (assuming that countywide capital projects are funded with priority).
- The Board of Education’s Requested CIP aligns the schedule of four high school capacity projects currently in construction stage to be completed in 2027. If approved as scheduled, this would offer MCPS an opportunity to conduct a comprehensive boundary study across multiple clusters and schools and balance the disparate utilization rates and demographics.
- Planning Staff conducted a high-level review of the new individual capital projects included in the Board of Education’s Request that would be subject to the Planning Board’s mandatory referral process, if approved, and compiled a list of preliminary comments on site design considerations that should be taken into account early in the CIP process in line with the recently approved MOU between M-NCPPC and Montgomery County Public Schools.

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## INTRODUCTION

The County Executive published his Recommended FY25 Capital Budget and the FY25-30 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) on January 16, 2024. The County Executive’s Recommended CIP may be found at:

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OMB/Resources/Files/omb/pdfs/fy25/ciprec/MontgomeryCountyPublicSchools.pdf>

Previous to that, the Board of Education released their Requested FY 2025 Capital Budget and the FY 2025-2030 Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). The Board of Education’s Requested CIP may be found at:

[https://gis.mcpsmd.org/cipmasterpdfs/CIP25\\_BOECIP.pdf](https://gis.mcpsmd.org/cipmasterpdfs/CIP25_BOECIP.pdf)

Unlike the transportation CIP process, the Executive only provides macro level expenditure assumptions for MCPS and assumes undesignated cuts or deferrals without a breakdown of recommendations for each project. The Council’s Education & Culture (E&C) Committee instead reviews a list of ‘non-recommended reductions’ provided by MCPS to align the Board of Education’s Request with the County Executive’s assumptions and discusses how best to prioritize restoration of projects if additional funding becomes available during the reconciliation process.

In this report, Planning Staff provides an overview of the County Executive’s Recommendation in comparison to the Board of Education (BOE)’s Request, and a summary of individual school capital projects included in the request. Also included in Attachment 1 are preliminary Planning Staff comments on site design considerations for the individual school projects newly added in the Requested CIP that would be subject to the Planning Board’s mandatory referral process, if approved.

Planning Staff recommends the Planning Board transmit the comments to the County Council for review by the Education and Culture Committee (E&C) and MCPS during their upcoming CIP work sessions.

## OVERVIEW OF MCPS' FY25-30 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

### COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S RECOMMENDATION VS. BOARD OF EDUCATION'S REQUEST

The Board of Education's Requested FY25-30 CIP totals \$1.999 billion, which is \$91.8 million (or 4.8%) more than the 6-year total of the FY23-28 CIP amended last year. The County Executive's Recommendation for the FY25-30 CIP, however, is the same as the previous CIP's 6-year total and assumes undesignated cuts or deferrals to projects included in the Board of Education's Requested CIP. The total expenditure deferrals or cuts needed across the first four years of the CIP are especially higher.

The following table and graph present the Board of Education's Requested FY25-30 CIP and the County Executive's Recommendation for MCPS year by year in comparison to the Amended FY23-28 CIP (the amended FY23 and FY24 budgets are not shown but included in the 6-yr total).

Table 1 MCPS FY25-30 CIP Comparison Table (in millions)

	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	Six-Yr Total
<b>FY23-28 Amended</b>	\$ 369.4	\$ 336.8	\$ 286.3	\$ 198.3	-	-	\$ 1,907.6
<b>FY25-30, BOE Request</b>	\$ 466.2	\$ 477.2	\$ 433.9	\$ 329.5	\$ 169.5	\$ 123.1	\$ 1,999.4
<i>diff. from amended</i>	\$ 96.8 26.2%	\$ 140.4 41.7%	\$ 147.5 51.5%	\$ 131.2 66.1%	-	-	\$ 91.8 4.8%
<b>FY25-30, CE Rec.</b>	\$ 411.1	\$ 366.7	\$ 333.9	\$ 248.2	\$ 239.8	\$ 307.9	\$ 1,907.6
<i>diff. from amended</i>	\$ 41.7 11.3%	\$ 29.9 8.9%	\$ 47.6 16.6%	\$ 49.9 25.2%	-	-	\$ 0.0 0%
<i>diff. from BoE's Req.</i>	\$ (55.1) -11.8%	\$ (110.5) -23.2%	\$ (100.0) -23.0%	\$ (81.3) -24.7%	\$ 70.3 41.4%	\$ 184.8 150.1%	\$ (91.8) -4.6%

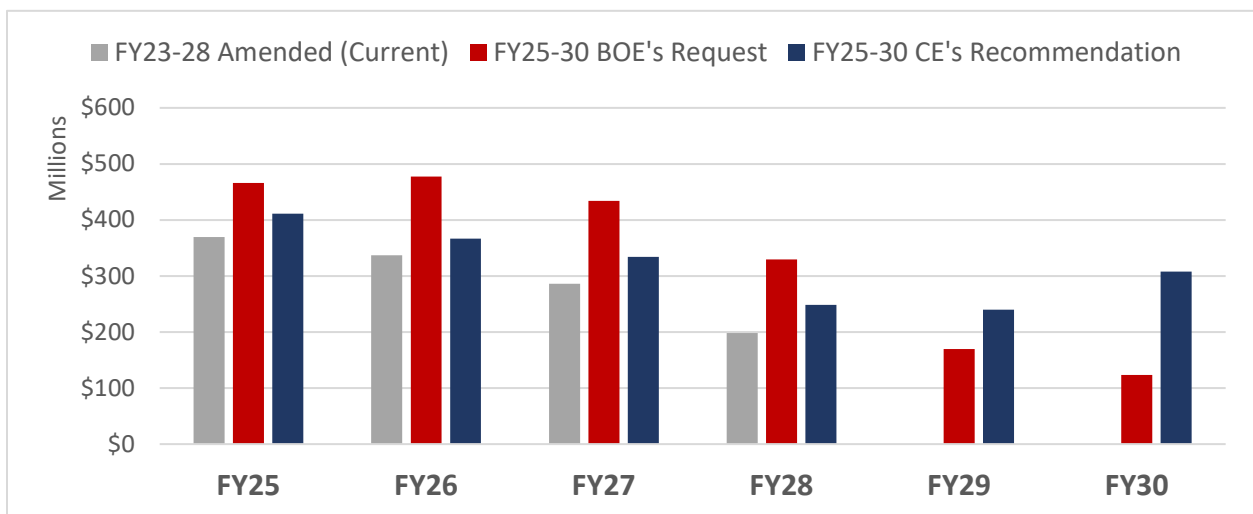


Figure 1 Comparison of MCPS FY25-30 CIP – Previous Amendment vs. BOE Request vs. CE Recommendation

The graph below (Figure 2) further breaks down the BOE's Requested CIP by project status and compares it to the CE's Recommended funding level by fiscal year. A table outlining the actual dollar amount of proposed expenditures for each individual school capital project by fiscal year is also

included in Attachment 2. Of particular significance is the fact that in the first two years of the CIP, the Executive’s recommended funding level (represented by the thin navy bar in the center) falls short of even reaching the expenditures for projects scheduled to be in construction stage (shown in the green portion of the multi-color stacked bar). This presents a major challenge for numerous MCPS capital projects to be delivered as scheduled.

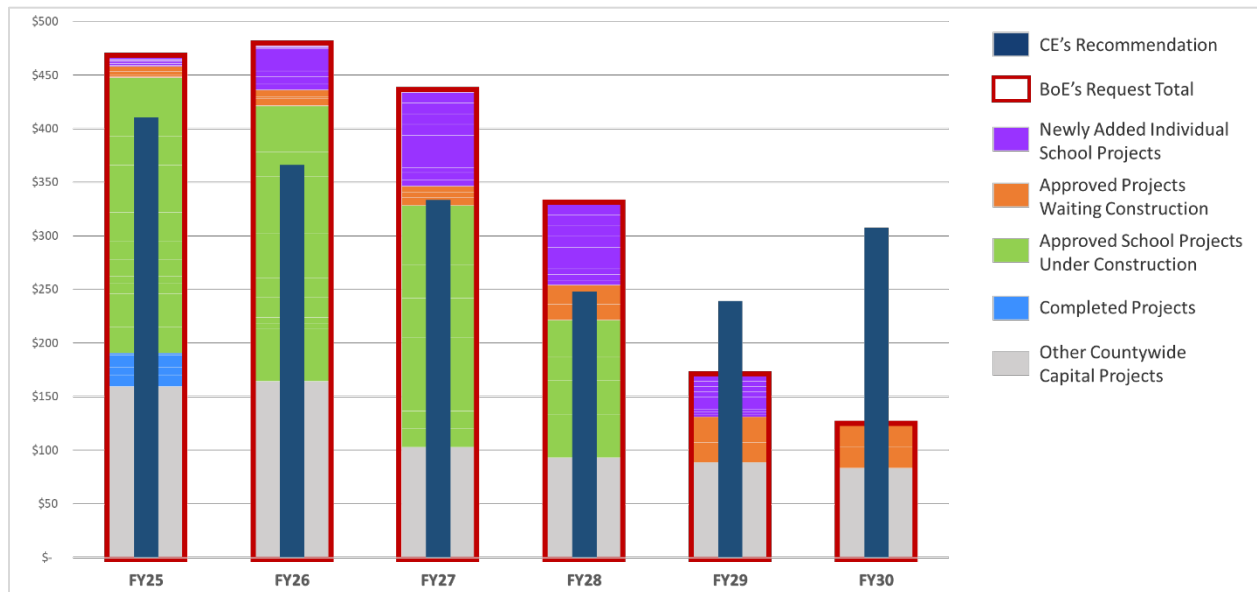


Figure 2 Proposed MCPS Capital Budget Expenditures by Project Status and Fiscal Year

For MCPS’ CIP, the County Executive does not provide a breakdown of which project expenditures he recommends reducing, deferring, or moving. Instead, at the E&C Committee’s request, MCPS provides a list of ‘non-recommended reductions’ that would align the Board of Education’s Request with the County Executive’s Recommendation. The Council’s E&C Committee then reviews these non-recommended reductions and discusses how best to prioritize spending if additional funding beyond what the Executive allocated becomes available for the schools CIP.

The E&C Committee currently has a work session scheduled to discuss MCPS’ CIP on the 29<sup>th</sup> of February. The full Council will then reconcile the entire CIP by mid-May based on all expenditure and funding changes recommended by the various committees, final revisions to local revenue sources (such as impact taxes and recordation taxes), and final decisions regarding the availability of state aid.

## SUMMARY OF BOARD OF EDUCATION’S CIP REQUEST FOR INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL PROJECTS

The Board of Education’s Requested FY25-30 CIP includes 27 individual school projects.

Projects that are newly added to the CIP this year are:

- Additions – Blake HS, Paint Branch HS, Mill Creek Towne ES

- Major Capital Projects – Eastern MS (newly requested construction expenditures), Cold Spring ES, Damascus ES, Twinbrook ES, Whetstone ES

Projects in the construction stage or near completion are:

- New Construction – Crown HS, Woodward HS, Burtonsville ES, JoAnn Leleck ES
- Major Capital Projects – Damascus HS, Poolesville HS, Neelsville MS, Burnt Mills ES, Stonegate ES, Woodlin ES
- Additions – Northwood HS, Silver Spring International MS, Greencastle ES, William T. Page ES

Projects that are approved but not in the construction stage are:

- New Schools – BCC/Walter Johnson Cluster ES
- Major Capital Projects – Magruder HS, Wootton HS, Piney Branch ES
- Additions – Highland View ES

Some changes reflected in the Board of Education’s Request for individual school projects compared to the Amended FY23-28 CIP are substantial construction cost increases for Damascus HS, Burtonsville ES, and JoAnn Leleck ES, and a one-year delay in Damascus HS, Northwood HS, Woodward HS, and JoAnn Leleck ES. MCPS has noted that these delays are due to increased construction timelines, and not fiscal constraints.

With the one-year delay of Damascus HS, Northwood HS, and Woodward HS, the completion date of these high school projects, scheduled for 2027, aligns with that of Crown HS. This would offer MCPS a rare opportunity to conduct a comprehensive boundary change across multiple clusters and schools and balance the disparate utilization rates and demographics.

**STAFF COMMENTS ON SITE DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR NEW SCHOOL PROJECTS**

The Planning Department and Parks Department staff and leadership worked diligently with MCPS over the past two years to adopt an MOU that highlights several areas for enhanced partnering in each agency’s planning process and lays out a more collaborative approach for reviewing school projects (see Attachment 3). In light of that MOU, Planning Staff conducted a high-level review of the new individual capital projects proposed in the Board of Education’s CIP Request that would be subject to the Planning Board’s mandatory referral process if approved (Blake HS, Paint Branch HS, Mill Creek Towne ES, Cold Spring ES, Damascus ES, Whetstone ES) and compiled a list of preliminary comments related to site design considerations that should be taken into account early in the CIP process.

The comments reflect Planning’s overall perspective on capital investment in schools as an opportunity to advance the county’s Vision Zero goals, achieve *Climate Action Plan* targets, and help implement key planning concepts of Compact Growth, Complete Communities, and Design

Excellence identified as priorities within *Thrive Montgomery 2050*. In general, the comments touch on promoting schools as safe, accessible public spaces by:

- Emphasizing street presence by moving buildings forward to the street edge.
- Deemphasizing vehicular circulation by narrowing drive aisles and placing bus circulation away from school fronts.
- Improving neighborhood bike and pedestrian accessibility and promoting Safe Routes to School goals.
- Attempting to make net zero energy schools.

In addition, Planning Staff recommends that an additional countywide project be established in the CIP to expand and upgrade bicycle parking availability at all MCPS schools. Based on a 2022 survey, over 8,000 bicycle parking spaces are needed at public schools, libraries, and recreation centers; the vast majority are needed at schools. To prioritize investments in bicycle parking, Planning Staff conducted an analysis to determine schools with the greatest need.

More detailed comments for each new school project and a list of schools identified as high priority for bicycle parking space investment can be found in Attachment 1. General comments regarding school site design and previously transmitted comments that may still be applicable to projects in their early planning and design stages are also included. While these are not considered official comments documented as part of the mandatory referral process, the intent in providing them – consistent with the M-NCPPC – MCPS MOU – is to enable the Montgomery County Planning Department and Montgomery County Parks Department’s constructive input to be reflected in MCPS’ capital planning process earlier than traditionally has been done and ensure that adequate funding is being considered for elements that may have budgetary implications.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Planning Staff recommends the Planning Board endorse the comments included in Attachment 1 to be transmitted to the County Council for review by the Education and Culture Committee (E&C) and MCPS during the school CIP discussions.

**Attachment 1** – Montgomery Planning Staff Comments on School Capital Projects in the Board of Education’s Request of MCPS’ FY25-30 Capital Improvement Program

**Attachment 2** – Board of Education’s Requested FY25-30 CIP for Individual School Capital Projects by Project Status

**Attachment 3** – MOU between MCPS and M-NCPPC Regarding Respective Planning Processes