

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY

The CIP presented in this EFMP reflects changes to the CIP as a result of an annual review of the demographic and facility needs of SMCPs. Based on a slow down in enrollment growth that began occurring in 2015 and the systemic renovation needs of the many facilities constructed in the 1990's, the CIP continues to reflect a focus on maintaining existing infrastructure. While there may be individual schools that exceed capacity, the current enrollment projections do not indicate a level of growth to warrant requesting any new capacity projects within the next six years. State requirements for capacity projects are that half of the proposed enrollment be present at the time the project is requested and that the remaining students to fill the capacity are projected to be in place at the time construction is completed. Recent local development activity seems to be indicating that additional residential projects are beginning to move forward. This development activity will be monitored closely and taken into consideration when determining future capacity needs. Other factors to be considered in the capacity discussion include the results of implementation of a new excise tax on residential and commercial development, the county adequate public facilities requirements, the future of the virtual academy, home school programs, and the implementation of additional PreKindergarten (PreK) capacity as part of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint). The 2022 Facility Utilization Study includes a variety of options to address future capacity needs and serves as a resource in future capital project planning. In addition, SMCPs is implementing new software that will be utilized in the future to predict capital project needs, including CIP work to extend the useful life of key building components. The EFMP serves as the planning tool for all State CIP projects, which includes the traditional State CIP, Healthy Schools Facility Fund (HSFF), School Safety Grant Program (SSGP), Aging School Program (ASP), School Safety Fund Grant (SSFG), Pass Through Grant (PTG), and Built to Learn Act (BTLA) funding.

A. Historical Perspective

During the 1990's, the school system embarked on an aggressive modernization program to bring the existing public school facilities up to modern educational standards while meeting the needs of our growing student population. Funding from the state Public School Construction Program (PSCP), during that time, was focused on addition/renovation projects and the school system was able to obtain significant state funding for the addition/modernization of seven elementary schools, two middle schools, and all three high schools. In addition, the school system replaced the former Hollywood Elementary School with a larger facility on a new site to accommodate growth in the northern portion of the Lexington Park Development District (LPDD). The school system maintained a program to address older facilities through systemic modernization including roofs and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, as well as the federally mandated American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) initiative.

As student populations grew, the focus of the school construction program shifted to providing capacity through new school construction. The George Washington Carver Elementary School was replaced with a new facility that was located outside of the Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ). The new facility was built larger to meet the student population needs of the LPDD in combination with the addition/renovation of Lexington Park Elementary School, which had been previously completed in 2001. The ability to construct the

required additional capacity to meet the needs of a growing community was analyzed at the remaining schools, which had not yet received an addition/renovation. Based on site constraints and location to the proposed student populations to be served, it was determined that a program would be developed around a new school construction plan.

Two new schools were constructed in growth areas to meet the growing elementary school population. Both sites were chosen for their ability to meet the needs of the school system into the future.

Opened	School Name	State Capacity	Location
2009-10	Evergreen E.S.	647	California, MD
2015-16	Captain Walter Francis Duke E.S.	644	Leonardtown, MD

The school system has acquired a site south of Great Mills that can be used as the third new elementary school, when needed. Given the continued slower enrollment growth at the elementary school level, the need for this project is beyond the current six-year CIP. Should enrollment patterns change, the timing of the project will be adjusted accordingly.

To date, the school system has completed the expansion and modernization of eight elementary schools, all four middle schools, all three high schools, one career and technology center, and has built four new elementary schools:

Elementary Schools Modernized (9 out of 18)

Benjamin Banneker (1999), Dynard (1990), Leonardtown (2006), Lettie Marshall Dent (1991), Lexington Park (1999), Mechanicsville (2024), Green Holly (1999), Park Hall (1992), Piney Point (1995)

Middle Schools Modernized (4 out of 4)

Esperanza (1997), Margaret Brent (1998), Leonardtown (2011), Spring Ridge (2016)

High Schools Modernized (3 out of 3)

Chopticon (1997), Great Mills (1994), Leonardtown (1998)

Career and Technology Center Modernized

Dr. James A. Forrest Career & Technology Center (DJAFCTC) (2001)

New School Construction

Hollywood Elementary School (1991), George Washington Carver Elementary School (2003), Evergreen Elementary School (2009), Captain Walter Francis Duke Elementary School (2015)

In 2007 the Chesapeake Public Charter School (CPCS) was opened. This facility serves Kindergarten through eighth grade. The school has recently undergone an expansion into additional space and increased its capacity. The total capacity for the 2024-2025 school year will be 540. There are no further expansion plans at this time.

The school system has met the needs of the existing infrastructure through state-funded limited renovations, roof replacements, HVAC renovations, science lab modifications, Technology in Maryland projects, PreK classroom additions, Kindergarten classroom additions, lighting projects, energy conservation projects, security projects, and gymnasium additions. In

addition to the state-funded projects, the school system also meets the needs of the physical environments of our schools with locally funded projects, including: ADA, asbestos abatement, clean air, HVAC, roof replacement, parking, relocatable classrooms, well replacements, sewer plants, playgrounds, flooring, paving, fields and grounds, and meeting changing educational program requirements. The average age of facilities in 2023 was 30 years.

B. Current Findings

Projected Student Growth

Based on current enrollment projections, the school system will receive 35 new elementary school students, 198 new middle school students, and 352 new high school students in the next six years. The CIP is fluid and adjusted as growth patterns change and student enrollment is impacted.

The county's population was 113,777 persons in the 2020 Census. This was an increase of 8,626 persons since the last Census, which is an 8.2% increase. This is less than the July 1, 2020 estimate of 113,999 but a higher percentage increase than the 7% seen statewide. The population is projected to reach 129,700 persons by the year 2030. The Southern Maryland region is projected to grow to 413,850 persons by 2030, with the 129,700 in St. Mary's County representing 31% of the regional population. These projections were revised slightly downward in the last publication by the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) as expected based on the 2020 Census data. As of July 1, 2023 the county population was estimated to be 115,281.

This level pattern of growth is reflected in the current enrollment projections. While there will be increases in enrollment over the projection period, the secondary enrollment is forecast to level out in the following years. The net change in total enrollment at the end of the six year projection period indicates an additional

585 students. In the sixth year, which is the 2029-2030 school year, it is forecast that there will be 17,757 students enrolled in grades PreK-12. This breaks down to an additional 35 elementary school students (including PreK), an additional 198 middle school students, and an additional 352 high school students over the current enrollment. These projected enrollments do not support a new capacity project. With that said however, recent events have shown that projections and plans can change very quickly. Demographic data will be closely monitored as the recovery from COVID-19 continues and residential project reviews are increasing, with the CIP remaining fluid and adjusted to meet growth and enrollment as necessary. As is always the case, any future capacity needs will also need to be balanced with available funding and timing of capital projects.

C. Proposed Plan

Based on the current projected enrollment needs, the proposed CIP reflects the deferral of any new capacity projects beyond the next six years. While there is a shortfall of capacity at several schools within the county, there is insufficient capacity needs to obtain funding approval from the state, which currently provides 58% of the eligible construction funding. The IAC requires that approximately 50% of the students required for the new school be enrolled at the time of approval and that the remaining students required to fill the building will be in place at occupancy. Our current demographics fall short of the required enrollments for approval based on the state rated capacities (SRC) of our existing facilities.

School Type	Proposed New SRC	Existing SRC	FY 2025 Projected Enrollment	FY 2029 Projected Enrollment	FY 2025 Difference	FY 2029 Difference
Elementary	644	8,791	7,879	7,857	912	934
Middle	500	4,207	3,851	4,094	356	113
High	508	5,085	5,526	5,698	(441)	(613)

Throughout the projection period, there is a surplus of capacity at the elementary school level and sufficient capacity at the middle school level. While there is a shortfall of approximately 600 seats at the high school level, this shortfall is not projected to grow much larger than that and actually begins to decrease in the outer years. There are insufficient capacity needs to warrant a new elementary school (644 capacity), middle school (1,100 capacity), or high school (1,695 capacity) during the next ten years based on current enrollment projections. This includes the previously proposed 1,200 seat capacity combination secondary facility. The facilities needs study provides options for addressing the projected capacity shortfall at the high school level as well as possibilities for maximizing available capacities. The tools provided in the study will be consulted moving forward as demographic and enrollment trends develop. The short term plan for dealing with individual school capacity issues will continue to be the utilization of relocatable classrooms. Both state and local resources will be utilized to provide relocatable classrooms where needed, with a goal to keep the age of such facilities at 15 years or less.

The proposed FY 2026 through FY 2031 capital plan addresses a large number of systemic and infrastructure related projects that are coming due for life cycle replacement or were deferred in the past as a result of the funding required to construct new schools. These projects include roof and HVAC systems, chiller and cooling tower replacements, plumbing and sewer systems, asphalt overlay and repairs, flooring replacement, and other needs such as athletic and auditorium system replacements. In addition, projects have been added that bundle HVAC components into an eligible state project in an effort to extend the life of these systems until funding is available to replace them. The school system utilized capital funds to renovate many of its existing facilities in the 1990's and early 2000's and now the systemic components of those projects have reached their life cycle replacements. These types of projects will be the focus of the capital plan for the next several years.

Moving forward there are several options for CIP funding at the state level. These include the traditional CIP, BTLA funding, the SSFG, the HSFF, the SSGP, and the ASP. Future funding may also include a Priority Fund which will be based on the results of the State Facilities Assessment (SFA). However, with that said, the limiting factor will be the annual local resources available to provide the cost share match for state eligible projects. The IAC is working closely with Local Education Agencies (LEA)s to determine their needs and maximize the use of available state funding. At this time there is one particular systemic project of such magnitude that it has redefined the planned project pipeline. This project is a limited renovation at Chopticon High School. The project has been expedited in order to utilize the available BTLA funding; however, doing so required revamping the remaining planned capital program based on annual available funding. SMCPs is working to address the requirements of receiving BTL funding, including the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Maryland Stadium Authority (MSA) and the county government. SMCPs will continue to seek

all funding options and work closely with the state and local government to maximize funding and provide for the capital needs of the school system.