

JOHNS ISLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

QUESTION/COMMENTS AND **RESPONSES**

March 23, 2023

The following document is a consolidation of recent questions and comments from our stakeholders and community members regarding the new Johns Island Elementary School. Operations and Capital Programs have responded to the received questions and concerns. We will continue to accept public comments and review concerns. Please email us at Capital@Charleston.k12.sc.us.

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

1. Find out where most of the students live that attend Mount Zion school now. If most of them live south of Maybank Hwy, is it really a good idea for them to be told to travel across Maybank Hwy twice a day to attend their new school on Upper River Rd? (This will cause more stress to the already congested intersections on Maybank Hwy and River Rd, and Maybank Hwy and Main Rd).

Response:

We do know where all of the Mt. Zion students live and this has been integral to our analysis. Transportation to the new school site from Mt. Zion Elementary School area can be completed without crossing the Maybank/River or the River/Main intersections. The new school being built will be more than twice as large as Mt. Zion and more students would be traveling to the current Mt. Zion Elementary School campus than would be traveling from the Mt. Zion attendance zone to the new school.

2. Consider keeping Mount Zion open (or remodel, demo and build new) for lower John's Island residents, while considering the proposed school on upper River Rd to accommodate residents' children that may live north of Maybank Hwy.

Response:

The Mt. Zion site was considered for the new school. The disadvantages of the need for a newer and larger on-site septic system and the difference in the number of students being transported to the Mt. Zion site compared to the current new site outweighed the advantages. The existing campus will continue to be used as a family engagement center by the school district.

3. Why are buses servicing James Island schools going to be parked at a school on Johns Island? Why not park them at a James Island school?

Response:

Unfortunately, our exhaustive 8 year search for dedicated bus parking property on James Island has been unsuccessful. However, with a small dedicated bus parking area on Johns Island we believe we can support the needs of our students and families, as we have in other areas without dedicated bus parking like Downtown Charleston and West Ashley. This includes supporting the more than 300 students on Johns Island who attend school on James Island, many of which require bus transportation.

4. The James Island buses will have to cross the Stono River Bridge twice a day, in the morning and again at the end of the school day. That bus traffic will negatively impact rush-hour traffic crossing the bridge. That traffic is already a problem. Was a study done to assess the impact of the additional buses on traffic on the bridge and on Johns Island?

Response:

The traffic study, which meets the requirements for South Carolina Department of Transportation and the City of Charleston, for the new Johns Island elementary school and bus parking area analyzed the impact of 68 buses. The new school site has a dedicated parking area for approximately 31 buses with overflow visitor parking for school events. Three of the four daily trips by buses to and from James Island will be during non-rush hour traffic. The 4th trip is during afternoon rush hour, but buses from James Island would be making a right hand turn on to River Road from Maybank Highway.

5. Is the plan to park James Island school buses at the new Johns Island elementary school final or will the public have an opportunity to comment?

Response:

Both the school and dedicated bus parking area are acceptable uses of the property that was approved in the Planned Use Development when Swygert's Landing was proposed. We will, however, continue to accept public comments and review concerns.

6. Late 2022, I attended a public meeting regarding the proposed elementary school on River Road. The decision had been made where the school was to be placed, the architecture, the attendance and the headmaster. What had not been planned? The infrastructure of our island roads for transportation to/from the school and the number of additional cars/busses that would be traveling on two of the three MAJOR road arteries of our island - Maybank Highway and River Road. We were informed that the SCDOT (not present at the meeting) was doing their part to have a study done of the impact to the property owners in the area, and as a property owner in this area - I still have not been approached. They informed us of a roundabout near the school and possibly adding a turn lane on Brownswood Road. They knew nothing of the SCDOT intersection study that I requested in 2020 due to MULTIPLE MAJOR accidents at that intersection (1 of which totalled my daughters car on private property about 100+ yards back from the stop sign @ Brownswood, another one running the stop sign and almost ending up in her house, the list goes on). The result of the intersection study was that there was NO NEED for additional signage or changes to the intersection. Why not try taking a drive down River Road between Maybank Highway and Main Road after 4pm Monday - Friday? NOT Google Maps. Take the time to see how long it takes you, check out the conditions of the road(s) and volume of traffic, and finally check out the lack of Law Enforcement managing speed on this road that is set for 45MPH....each day I see many cars passing 2-3 cars at a time and then you want to add our children to this mess?! Smart, really smart!

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Response:

Our traffic study determined that right turn lanes from Brownswood onto River Road and left hand turn lanes from River Road onto Brownswood should be installed. With support from local State Representatives and your County Council Member, we are working with Charleston County and the South Carolina Department of Transportation on options for further improvements to this intersection. We will be reaching out to you and other residents at this intersection when information is available.

To your point about vehicle speeds on River Road, we believe that the planned roundabout on our property for one of the three school entrances further down on River Road will provide some relief.

7. In response to #4, you mention that the impact of 68 buses was analyzed but that the school site has dedicated parking for only about 31 buses. If 68 buses will be parked each day at the new school, why isn't there dedicated parking for all 68 buses? Of the 68 buses, how many will service Johns Island schools and how many will service James Island schools?

Response:

Since conducting the analysis for 68 buses, the school district has reduced the number of buses and parking spaces at the new campus to 31. The actual number of the 31 buses that would travel to and from James Island would vary based on student transportation needs, but as of today, 27 of the buses would support James Island schools.