

# **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. While recent local development review activity has increased, the more recent federal government job/budget trimming as well as trade discussions will likely have a significant impact on the county economy, particularly given the number of federal government workers located in the county. Other factors to be considered in the capacity discussion include the results of full implementation of the new excise tax on residential and commercial development, the county adequate public facilities requirements, home school and non-public school enrollment, the implementation of additional PreKindergarten (PreK) capacity as part of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Blueprint), and the potential for school closings and redistricting. 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. This report will be utilized and expanded upon in any future decisions regarding school closings and redistricting. In addition, SMCPS is working internally to complete a comprehensive review of all project needs and prioritize state and local projects based on the most pressing priority needs. The need for critical infrastructure needs including roof, HVAC, chiller, and window/door replacement is critical to ensure continuity in service. Given current and projected future fiscal constraints, there will need to be a hard look at potential failure points and how to extend the life of system components until systemic projects can be funded. 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. After several phases of expansion, the capacity of CPCS

was increased to a total of 540. There are no further expansion plans at this time. The total capacity for the 2024-2025 school year will be 540.

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 2024 was 31 years, an increase of one year from 2023.

## B. Current Findings

### ***Projected Student Growth***

***Based on current enrollment projections, the school system will receive 350 new elementary school students, and lose (104) middle school students, and lose (307) 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 123,860 persons by the year 2030. The Southern Maryland region is projected to grow to 406,970 persons by 2030, with the 123,860 in St. Mary's County representing 30% of the regional population. These projections were revised slightly downward in the March 2025 draft publication by the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) from the previous projection in 2022. As of July 1, 2024 the county population was estimated to be 116,469. This is an increase of 1,188 person over the July 2023 estimate.

This level pattern of growth is reflected in the current enrollment projections. While there will be increases in enrollment in individual years over the projection period, the cumulative impact will be an increase in elementary enrollment, albeit not sufficient to warrant the construction of new capacity and a decrease in both middle and high school secondary enrollment. The net change in total enrollment at the end of the six-year projection period indicates a net loss of 61 students. In the sixth year, which is the 2030-2031 school year, it is forecast that there will be 16,800 students enrolled in grades PreK-12. This breaks down to an additional 350 elementary school students (including PreK), a loss of 104 middle school students, and a loss of 307 high school students over the current enrollment. These projected enrollments do not support a new capacity project. Demographic data will continue to be closely monitored, 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

some 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 2026 Projected Enrollment	FY 2030 Projected Enrollment	FY 2026 Difference	FY 2030 Difference
Elementary	644	8,791	7,752	8,010	1,039	781
Middle	1,100	4,207	3,760	3,662	447	545
High	1,695	5,085	5,115	5,094	(30)	(9)

Throughout the projection period, there is a surplus of capacity at the elementary and middle school levels, while there is a small shortfall of capacity at the high school level in certain years. However, high school capacity ends the period with a surplus of seats that is projected to grow in the years beyond the projection period. 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 2022 facility utilization study provides options for balancing/maximizing available capacities. The tools provided in the study will be consulted moving forward as utilization is reviewed in terms of potential redistricting and/or school closures. The short-term plan for dealing with individual school capacity issues will continue to be the utilization of relocatable classrooms. The school system is currently looking at the relocatable inventory and removing those units that have exceeded their useful life and for which the cost of repairs is more than replacement, with a goal of keeping the age of such facilities at 15 years or less.

The proposed FY 2027 through FY 2032 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 eligible state projects in an effort to extend the life of these systems until funding is available to replace them. The current number of systemic projects directly relates to the school system utilizing 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. The school system will continue to work to balance the systemic needs and re-prioritize as conditions dictate in an effort to maintain school facilities to the best of its abilities, all while constantly looking for any and all available funding sources to utilize in the effort. Systemic infrastructure projects will be the focus of the capital plan for the foreseeable future.

Moving forward there are multiple options for CIP funding at the state level, although there will be changes to some of them. FY 2026 marked the last year of ASP funding. BTLA funding was one time funding that will be exhausted with the Chopticon H.S. Multi-Systemic Roof/HVAC project. Other state funding sources that will continue include the traditional CIP,

the SSFG, the SSGP, and the HSFF. The HSFF will be replaced in the future with the Priority Fund which will be based on the results of the State Facilities Assessment (SFA). But at this time the parameters of the Priority Fund have yet to be established. It is important to note that even with available state funding, the limiting factor will always be the annual local resources available to provide the cost share match (currently 42%) 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. The current capital plan is centered around the funding of the Chopticon High School Multi-Systemic Renovation. This project is of such magnitude that it has redefined the planned project pipeline. Numerous other systemic projects have been delayed in order to have both the state and local funding necessary for this project and the county has planned their other capital projects around the systemic renovation at Chopticon H.S. 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.