

September 11, 2023

Members

Arlington County School Board  
2110 Washington Boulevard  
Arlington, VA 22204

Dear Arlington School Board Members:

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Donaldson Run Civic Association (DRCA), we are writing to bring to your attention concerns raised by DRCA members about the pre-Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) report, as it relates to the draft middle school boundary proposal.

Six years ago, APS determined to return the old Stratford/HB Woodlawn site to a neighborhood middle school. The key consideration in doing so was the well-established factor of proximity to the neighborhood. In this connection, APS assured the neighbors that traffic to the new school would be minimized since a great many since a great many students would be walkers. Our belief is that proposal being considered now goes back on this commitment and, thus, does not promote community trust. Dozens of residents of Donaldson Run, both those with school-aged children and those without, have weighed in with APS on the many benefits of walking to school and the adverse impact of additional buses, parent-driven students and much earlier student wake-up times. We were distressed to learn that 90% of the middle schoolers who would shift from Hamm to Williamsburg under the pre-CIP report are currently in the Hamm walk zone.

We also feel that before making any significant boundary change, APS should avail itself the most current data. As we understand it, final school counts will not be available until the end of this month and there are preliminary indications that Williamsburg has a higher student count than initially believed. In evaluating this data, APS should seek and implement the most creative solutions to achieve its stated criteria, especially proximity. Surely, there must be ways of easing crowding at Gunston while increasing capacity at Williamsburg without creating such burdensome dislocation for the many students currently thriving in Hamm's supportive community.

We endorse the position of the County Council of PTAs, which recommends opening targeted voluntary transfers to shift students from overcrowded schools to those that are under capacity.

Finally, projected future enrollments at Arlington's schools are just that - projections. These estimates can and have proven to be inaccurate over time. Indeed, just several years ago Arlington opened two new elementary schools due to overcrowding but today is proposing to close one due to under capacity. Any change in boundary based on future estimated enrollments should only be taken with the utmost prudence, while retaining flexibility to adapt to unforeseen future circumstances.

For all of these reasons, we ask that you consider less detrimental alternatives to the middle school boundary proposal in the pre-CIP report. Further, we look forward to your continued discussions with Donaldson Run residents over the coming weeks on this most important matter.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

*Bill Richardson*

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Bill Richardson, President

Donaldson Run Civic Association

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*John Seggerman*

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