

Montgomery County Council
Amendments to the FY25-30 CIP Hearing & FY26 Operating Budget Hearing
April 8, 2025
Testimony of Melissa McKenna

My name is Melissa McKenna. I'm here to start off your afternoon with something completely different: the MCPS Shady Grove bus depot relocation. This project has been an accidental hobby since ... 2014. And here we are still no closer to a solution.

Quick recap: In 2022, I testified to Rockville Mayor and Council against the County Executive's plan to relocate **some** of the buses to the former Montgomery County Detention Center at Seven Locks and Wootton Parkway. In 2023, the County Executive removed construction funding "based on community feedback." The gentler way of saying Rockville vehemently opposed the unwanted dumping of the depot in yet another inappropriate city location.

What site did that \$250K identify?

I have it on unofficial but good authority that the chosen site this time is the former Rockville landfill on E. Gude Drive, something former Rockville Mayor Bridget Newton suggested eons ago. There's already remediation activity going on there but nothing has been formally put forward that I'm aware of.

However, this is **again** an **incomplete** solution: "this relocation will [ONLY] accommodate 250 of the 450 buses ... at the Crabbs Branch facility."

As I have said many times to every government body, only a **COMPLETE relocation** solution should be considered. A piecemeal approach is unacceptable. The assertion of only electric buses on the site is an attempted end run around noise and air pollution objections to the project. Nothing more. Then there's the cost.

The average cost of an electric school bus is ~\$400K. For 250 school buses (a mere blip or 19% of the MCPS 1300+ fleet): That's **\$100M just for buses**. Don't forget additional, substantial infrastructure costs for charging stations.

And what of the rest of the roughly 200 remaining "homeless" buses? We still don't have a magical floating island for schools or buses. They can't and won't be parked at MCPS schools. Thank you Dr. Taylor for that reassurance. Besides it would require state legislation to lock the school buses.

Please only approve construction funding for the bus depot relocation after the public and likely the home municipality are aware of and have accepted the relocation site and plan.

The best thing I can say is, at least it's not in the MCPS budget.

Consider using that \$10M towards other CIP amendments:

- Release the funds necessary to build complete Woodward and Crown HSs
- Do not scale back on Library refresh projects. Libraries are the hearts of the community after schools and they are now under threat of federal funding cuts.
- Redirect *Montgomery Connects* money to MCPS so that every child can take a Chromebook home.

1. Because during my food deliveries these past 5 years, people didn't want computers; they wanted food. That was a federal grant; now it's our choice.
2. The availability of Chromebooks beyond the school day has been restricted due to damage and loss (because, kids) but this could have catastrophic effects on learning at a time when educational resources are all digital and our students desperately need this resource at home.

Which of course brings me to the FY26 operating budget.

We are facing a cascading failure of the economy and it's already hit in ways I don't think you even realize. One of my deliverables was in tears the other day. Elise (not her real name) is an older, proud woman with a list of unending medical problems longer than I am tall with grown children and her mother depending on her fragile health to support them. Her county caseworker was let go because there is no more federal food money to distribute. Utility payment assistance programs have also been cut. And the current cold snap has her and many others trying to decide between extra heating costs or food or medicine.

We heard from Manna Executive Director Craig Rice during the NAACP Branch meeting that there is a 6-week wait for new families to receive food. All that said please support our nonprofits as much as possible to fill what gaps they can.

The choice is cut now or more face disruptive cuts mid-year. I'm sorry, not budget cuts: "savings plans." As Dr. DeRionne Pollard explained in a way that almost made sense. We have to be prepared for the unexpected and the worst from the federal government as their budget cycle is off from ours.

I appreciated Dr. Taylor's explanation and candor of the MCPS budget as a broccoli budget. Nothing fancy and not even solving some problems but fulfilling promised commitments.

We've absorbed years of the state shifting teacher pensions to county budgets. Last I recall that was \$90M, and we will need "absorb" an additional \$21M shift that's not included in the current budget.

Don't misunderstand. Do I believe our teachers and support staff should be paid more? ABSOLUTELY! Still, at some point, like any household budget, there are hard decisions to make.

Considering all the talk about housing affordability in the County, I must call out the glaring incongruity of raising property taxes while thousands of our neighbors risk losing their job or contract. Increasing property taxes now even with the good intention specifically toward MCPS (don't think I didn't notice the County Exec's end run around needing a unanimous vote) doesn't make living here affordable. As you've heard from others, property values have risen considerably in the past two years of reassessments, (<https://dat.maryland.gov/Pages/Assessment-Reports.aspx>) creating to a natural rise in revenue available.

Keep in mind that there will be a limit to the tax burden those who are able to shoulder it will accept.

It is **OUR children**, other people's children, that brings me here today. They only get one shot! MCPS alone cannot solve all our students' problems.

Whatever the outcome of your budgetary decision, I urge the County Council to hold MCPS accountable for assigning resources to students with the greatest need. The support needed by these students should not be subject to any budget cuts.



MCPS Bus Depot and Maintenance Relocation (P360903)

Category	General Government	Date Last Modified	01/08/22
SubCategory	County Offices and Other Improvements	Administering Agency	General Services
Planning Area	Gaithersburg and Vicinity	Status	Planning Stage
		Relocation Impact	Yes

EXPENDITURE SCHEDULE (\$000s)

Cost Elements	Total	Thru FY21	Est FY22	Total 6 Years	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	Beyond 6 Years
Planning, Design and Supervision	18,009	1,009	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17,000
Land	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Site Improvements and Utilities	150	150	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Construction	66,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	66,000
Other	1,837	583	1,254	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	86,000	1,746	1,254	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	83,000

FUNDING SCHEDULE (\$000s)

Funding Source	Total	Thru FY21	Est FY22	Total 6 Years	FY 23	FY 24	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	Beyond 6 Years
G.O. Bonds	84,452	198	1,254	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	83,000
PAYGO	1,501	1,501	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Recordation Tax Premium (MCG)	47	47	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL FUNDING SOURCES	86,000	1,746	1,254	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	83,000

APPROPRIATION AND EXPENDITURE DATA (\$000s)

Appropriation FY 23 Request	-	Year First Appropriation	FY09
Appropriation FY 24 Request	-	Last FY's Cost Estimate	3,000
Cumulative Appropriation	3,000		
Expenditure / Encumbrances	1,746		
Unencumbered Balance	1,254		

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project is part of the Smart Growth Initiative program and provides for a comprehensive feasibility study and planning for the relocation of the Montgomery County Public Schools Bus Depot from the County Service Park on Crabbs Branch Way. Previous plans to acquire several sites for MCPS bus parking facilities to accommodate displaced buses when the site is redeveloped have been put on hold until an agreement can be reached on a project plan. It also includes staff supervision, consultant costs, demolition of existing improvements, and environmental clean up of the east side of Crabbs Branch Way.



MCPS Bus Depot and Maintenance Relocation

(P360903)

Category	General Government	Date Last Modified	03/13/25
SubCategory	County Offices and Other Improvements	Administering Agency	General Services
Planning Area	Gaithersburg and Vicinity	Status	Planning Stage
		Relocation Impact	Yes

Total	Thru FY24	Rem FY24	Total 6 Years	FY 25	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	FY 30	Beyond 6 Years
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EXPENDITURE SCHEDULE (\$000s)

Planning, Design and Supervision	2,015	1,200	65	750	750	-	-	-	-	-	-
Land	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Site Improvements and Utilities	2,150	150	-	2,000	2,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Construction	10,800	-	-	10,800	6,800	4,000	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1,091	583	8	500	-	500	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	16,060	1,937	73	14,050	9,550	4,500	-	-	-	-	-

FUNDING SCHEDULE (\$000s)

Current Revenue: General	3,750	177	73	3,500	1,000	2,500	-	-	-	-	-
G.O. Bonds	212	212	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PAYGO	1,501	1,501	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Recordation Tax Premium (MCG)	10,597	47	-	10,550	8,550	2,000	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL FUNDING SOURCES	16,060	1,937	73	14,050	9,550	4,500	-	-	-	-	-

APPROPRIATION AND EXPENDITURE DATA (\$000s)

Appropriation FY 26 Approp. Request	-	Year First Appropriation	FY09
Cumulative Appropriation	16,060	Last FY's Cost Estimate	5,510
Expenditure / Encumbrances	2,002		
Unencumbered Balance	14,058		

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project provides for a comprehensive feasibility study, planning, and implementation of the relocation of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Bus Depot from the County Service Park on Crabbs Branch Way. It includes build-out of a new facility, staff supervision, consultant costs, demolition of existing improvements, and environmental clean up on the east side of Crabbs Branch Way.

LOCATION

East side of Crabbs Branch Way north of Shady Grove

ESTIMATED SCHEDULE

Environmental clean up of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission facilities occurred in FY17, and demolition was completed in FY19. The Council intends that the Executive branch continue to work with MCPS to conduct a renewed site selection study for possible locations to replace the multiple functions on the current Shady Grove MCPS Transportation site. These include the central heavy maintenance facility and repair bays, MVA driver training course, and parking sufficient to replace the over 400 buses currently housed at the Shady Grove location. Site identification should include multiple options and an implementation plan and timeline to transition that maintains continuity of services for MCPS. The implementation plan should also reflect the initiative to transition the MCPS fleet to electric over the next 12-15 years. Build-out of new space is expected to begin in the Summer of 2025 and to complete in the Fall of 2026.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

In order to implement the County's Shady Grove Sector Plan which would capitalize on the existing investment in mass transit by creating a transit-oriented development community, the County Service Park must be relocated. Relocation of the facilities at the County Service Park will enable the County to realize both the transit-oriented development intended for the area and to address unmet needs. The County is faced with aging facilities that require extensive investment of funds to meet our needs. With the age of some of the facilities, the extent of the required investment must be weighed against the long-term ability of the facilities to satisfy current and future County needs. Plans and studies for this project include: M-NCPPC Shady Grove Sector Plan, approved by the Montgomery County Council, January 2006, adopted by the M-NCPPC, March 15, 2006; Montgomery County Property Use Study Updated Briefing to County Council, April 29, 2008 (based on Staubach Reports); Montgomery County Smart Growth Initiative Update to County Council, September 23, 2008.

OTHER