



May 26, 2026

Ms. Bethany Zecher Sutton, Chair
Arlington School Board
Syphax Education Center
2110 Washington Blvd.
Arlington, VA. 22204

Re: Comments on Superintendent's Draft CIP

Dear Chair Sutton and School Board Members,

Our organizations have carefully reviewed the Superintendent's draft CIP. We offer the following comments focused on how APS can achieve its ambitious education agenda and its climate and sustainability-related goals.

- Our first overarching comment is that we would like to see more information provided on how capital investments address the School Board's Climate Action Resolution and the sustainability targets in the APS strategic plan. The County and School Board's Climate Action Resolutions call for both entities to become carbon neutral by 2050. Therefore, investments in schools over the period of the CIP will determine whether those goals are met by 2050. To meet these goals school buildings need to become more energy efficient, ideally achieving results similar to Cardinal, Fleet, and Discovery, be all electric, incorporate rooftop solar whenever feasible, and provide infrastructure to support waste reduction and diversion to recycling and composting.
- The price tag for any system under consideration should include any expected state, federal, and utility incentives, and include a life-cycle assessment which accounts for both the upfront costs as well as the energy cost savings over time. This would make comparisons between alternatives more accurate. For example, the upfront costs of geothermal HVAC systems are higher than other systems, but they provide significant energy savings, require less maintenance, and last longer, often making them the best choice financially as well as for the climate. Discovery Elementary School's net zero construction saves APS over \$100,000 every year.

- The information provided in the Superintendent's presentation did not specify, in most cases, what types of HVAC systems were being installed where HVAC projects were being proposed. Installing fossil fuel systems in the near future would lock APS into fossil fuel use for another generation and is not consistent with APS's carbon neutral goal. There are several all-electric options that should be considered for each HVAC project, including geothermal systems, air-to-water heat pump systems, heat pump boilers, and electric resistance boilers as a last resort. Brand new gas boilers should not be on the list of options.
- It was not clear in the CIP whether new roofs would be solar-ready; this information should be provided. As energy costs rise, solar rooftops will be more valuable than ever, so it makes most sense to install roofs that are able to accommodate solar panels.
- We were disappointed that the CIP does not include any efforts to address the goal of full electrification of the school bus fleet by 2050. APS needs to develop a long-range plan for a more sustainable, fossil-free bus system that takes better advantage of the ART bus system and provides adequate space for charging.
- We were pleased to see that the CIP responded to the School Board's direction to analyze public-private partnerships and energy performance management contracts. Given economic constraints and substantial capital improvement needs, it makes sense to seriously consider these opportunities to fund additional projects, and we hope that these tools are reflected in the final CIP.
- Finally, recently-enacted Virginia legislation ([SB226](#)) requires that new or renovated schools establish waste separation infrastructure (such as places for trash, recyclables, and food scraps). In renovating school kitchens, APS should be sure to accommodate this new requirement. To further facilitate waste reduction and diversion in schools we strongly encourage APS to include dishwashing facilities in schools to support a transition to reusable dishware and utensils for food service. If including dishwashers in schools is not feasible, a central dishwashing facility should be established. Relying solely on single-use materials creates mountains of waste on a daily basis and is not sustainable.

We would be happy to discuss our comments in greater detail at any time, and we look forward to remaining engaged in the CIP review process. Thank you.

Sincerely,

/s/ _____

Elenor Hodges
Executive Director, EcoAction Arlington

Julie Rosenberg
Leader, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, Arlington Hub

Dean Amel
Chair, Sierra Club-Potomac River Group

Cc:

Dr. Franciso Duran, Superintendent, Arlington Public Schools
Andy Hawkins, Business Manager, APS Finance and Management Services
Kimberly Graves, Chief of School Support
Renee Harber, Assistant Superintendent for Facilities and Operations