FCPS Community Meetings to Discuss School Boundaries

All in-person and virtual community meetings

Board Priority:

Proximity

Promote contiguous attendance zones and maintain neighborhood groupings (to include condominium and apartment complexes) to eliminate and/or prevent establishment of attendance islands

Discussions on school boundary adjustments frequently highlighted the importance of maintaining neighborhood groupings, eliminating attendance islands, and ensuring safe, walkable access to schools. These considerations not only foster stronger community ties but also reduce the logistical and emotional burdens associated with long commutes. This analysis explores the key themes from these discussions related to proximity.

Importance of Walkability and Proximity to Schools

Community members emphasized the importance of students being able to walk or have a short commute to school. They expressed concerns about safety, convenience, and maintaining community cohesion.

Sample Quotes:

- "FCPS needs to coordinate with VDOT and Fairfax County for transportation concerns if there are more walkers and fewer buses."
- "Improve safety and walkability for kids."
- "Proximity to elementary (walkability, can then follow that group onward, more choice with high school options)."
- "Proximity to school is vital. Let walkers walk, keep neighborhoods together where possible, please."
- "Make sure houses within walking distance can have kids walk to their schools."
- "Walt Whitman - 100% bus in - issue of attendance island and can't walk to school."

- "Proximity to schools; students end up at schools that don't logically make sense."
- "Proximity (to build community, unnecessary commutes)."
- "Walkability and Transportation – to include for specific programs."

Impact of Long Commutes on Students

Parents and caregivers raised concerns about extended bus rides and long travel times. They pointed out the negative effects on student well-being, including less sleep, reduced participation in activities, and increased transportation costs.

Sample Quotes:

- "Length of bus ride because they're needing to go beyond their zone."
- "Less bussing needed, shorter routes, fewer buses."
- "Students are losing time in transit use."
- "Kids stay in the school closest to their home (walkability if possible)."
- "Transportation to & from school. In areas of overpopulation, when buses are full, students are left behind waiting for a late bus arrival."
- "We want short bus times."
- "Transportation – don't want children on the bus forever or miss bus."
- "Minimizing travel time—especially for elementary schools."

Transportation and Infrastructure Challenges

Community discussions highlighted transportation challenges such as limited bus availability, traffic congestion, and unsafe walking routes. Many called for better infrastructure planning before changing school boundaries.

Sample Quotes:

- "Transportation because limited sidewalks and options without buses."
- "Safety of the walkers → abusers, traffic (roads & sidewalks safe? No crossing roads & busy intersections)."
- "Better bus routes - less passing of other schools, shorter rides/distance to stops."

- "Traffic → Walking and busing safety. Assessments done to determine if walking vs. busing is safer."
- "Parents/guardians who don't have cars (navigating transportation in order to pick up students or attend events)."
- "Is Fairfax County addressing sidewalk issues? Also dangerous bus stop locations (Telegraph Road)."
- "Transportation time not high priority."

Community Cohesion and School Proximity

Residents expressed a desire to keep neighborhoods together by aligning school boundaries with natural community divisions. They argued that school placement should strengthen social ties rather than disrupt them.

Sample Quotes:

- "Proximity due to community integration, allows after school activity, easier transportation."
- " Having boundaries reflect community cohesion – keeping communities together.
- "Proximity (to build community, unnecessary commutes)."
- "Neighborhoods—focus on continuity and cohesion."
- "Students & families want to feel like they are in a synchronous community."
- "Keeping communities together—aligning neighborhoods from elementary to middle to high school."
- "The school boundaries build community, so making sure that any changes would encourage more community. Speaking about proximity to schools."