

**Lakeside Cluster Summit**  
**Secondary Schools Facility Planning a& Feasibility Study**  
**Position Paper**  
**November 1, 2016**

*I. Introduction*

The Lakeside Cluster Summit (LCS) is comprised of seven elementary schools, Henderson Middle School and Lakeside High School. For two decades – since the Lakeside Cluster’s creation in 1995 through strong cross-sector community input and extensive planning – parents and teachers have worked as part of and alongside other community members to build and strengthen the cluster in its natural geographic and community borders. For the reasons set out below, LCS strongly supports maintaining its current cluster borders and implementing our own solution to projected cluster growth rather than that currently proposed by DCSD.

The Lakeside Cluster Summit was formed as a more formal vehicle for parents, administrators and community members in the Lakeside feeder pattern to come together to address and communicate about issues of concern to our Lakeside school community. Lakeside Cluster proudly celebrates our racial and socio-economic diversity including its Title1 high school, middle school and several Title 1 elementary schools. Our meetings have been open to everyone and specifically included School Councils, PTA leaders, and principals from all schools in the Lakeside Cluster as well as interested parents, community members, teacher/administrators, School Board members and the Regional Superintendent.

Our goal as a cluster is to ensure the highest quality education for our students, and we recognize that keeping our community cohesive and geographically intact, allowing all students in the cluster to learn from each other’s experiences, and safe and modern facilities that permit teachers to focus on teaching, learning and curriculum, all serve that goal. Since release of the Secondary Schools Facility Planning and Feasibility Study Recommendations , LCS has held ongoing meetings to discuss them. We have assessed the Recommendations themselves and their impact on our district, as well as and in conjunction with the specific proposed line item expenditures, by school, for the other categories of proposed ESPLOST V funding. Based on that review, LCS respectfully submits its response and position.

## II. *General Principles*

- A. We believe all children deserve high quality schools with safe and positive learning environments, including well-maintained facilities. We support thoughtful evaluation of all alternatives, and a deliberative, rather than rushed, evaluation of use of ESPLOST-V funds
- B. We believe that, in developing any proposal, the voices of the impacted clusters and communities should be taken into careful account. This is especially so where cohesive communities, safety and proximity are at issue.
- C. We support the ability of LCS, consistent with allocated funds and in a cost-neutral fashion, to itself recommend what is necessary to absorb the growth in population in our cluster.
- D. Being mindful of these principles, as well as of DCSC Policy AD, which looks to criteria including basing attendance on geographic proximity, instructional capacity, and projected enrollment, as well as, among others, safety and traffic patterns, school feeder alignment, and keeping neighborhoods intact, we oppose any fragmenting of our cluster. We specifically oppose any redistricting of Sagamore Hills Elementary School or any other of Lakeside HS's current local feeder pattern out of LCS.

## III. *Smart Growth and Construction*

We would like to partner with the DCSD Planning Department to develop strategies and options to support smart growth and to create a flexible system for addressing changes in the student population. Any growth plan should:

- A. Utilize the construction process to make Lakeside High School more accessible to school buses, vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
- B. Ensure that the post--addition Lakeside has all of the resources necessary to operate in accordance with best practices for large high schools even if these resources and best practices are different than those used at other DCSD High Schools

- C. Consider planned developments as well as the existing and future traffic patterns when determining boundaries between Clusters.<sup>1</sup>
- D. Be based upon transportation studies examining impacts including existing congestion in the Briarcliff Road corridor as well as the gridlock existing at the beginning and ending of the school.
- E. Ensure the expansion of the campus is considerate of the close proximity of neighboring homes.
- F. Allow teachers to have their own classrooms and not have to float
- G. Ensure follow through for facilities upgrades for LCS schools committed to in both SPLOST IV (Henderson Mill, as a notable example) and for SPLOST V, with communicated and achievable deadlines

#### *IV. Options to Address Future LCS Needs*

The following represent elements of more realistic plan for making a 750 seat addition at Lakeside feasible in the context of a cost-neutral allocation of \$22.5 million from ESPLOST V funds. Because these plans are based on projections, and because the capacity data may also be interpreted in different fashions, we believe flexibility in planning is important.<sup>2</sup> A large addition, without more, does not provide the needed flexibility and misses an opportunity to add sensibly and best practices to the learning experience.

- Reconfigure access in and out of Lakeside property
- Reconfigure student and faculty parking lots, school bus and public transit lanes, carpool lines and consider a parking deck
- Consider additional access points (including walkways) using property behind Lakeside, space at the intersection of Briarlake Road and Briarcliff Road and the intersection of Briarcliff and Oak Grove Road (for example, if development over the marsh at the intersection of Briarlake and Briarcliff Roads is not possible, build an elevated boardwalk style walkway to enable

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<sup>1</sup> Among DeKalb County's 2014 Transportation Plan Vision and Goals are improving mobility for all people (Goal 1) and enhancing quality of life (Goal 2). See <http://www.dekalbtransportationplan2014.com/documents/ProjectVisionandGoals.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> As one example, by not moving 125 children out of Tucker and into LCS– and it appears the Tucker community supports keeping these 125 children in their current cluster – we materially reduce assumed capacity and assist in keeping the LCS cluster and community intact.

students to efficiently and safely walk to a school entrance while avoiding street and parking lot traffic)

- Improve pedestrian and bicycle access with additional connectivity (sidewalks, bike lanes, paths) through adjacent neighborhoods (all connected by neighborhood roads) in support of Georgia's Safe Routes to Schools program.
- Consider acquiring additional parcels of land adjacent to Lakeside
- Dedicated traffic assistance at Lakeside at arrival and dismissal times
- Partner with DeKalb County to improve roads and intersections at Briarcliff and Oak Grove Roads and Briarcliff and Briarlake Roads and resolve drainage issues
- Coordinate start and end times with Globe Academy and consider staggered start and end times
- Create shuttle sites (area churches and shopping centers) with school buses to transport students from parking and carpool drop off to Lakeside
- Create and enforce non-resident attendance policies

#### *V. Achieving Additional Capacity*

Rather than a large addition that does not address some of the other challenges identified in this report, LCS supports a **stand-alone 9th grade academy**. We have begun detailed work on this planning – including a modern, modular design, planning committee, transportation and parking studies, and location -- and anticipate continuing this process in conjunction with DCSD. Creating the academy will involve collecting input from all stakeholders and ensure:

- Lakeside teachers and parents involved in the planning and construction via a construction committee
- Planning including the entire Lakeside campus, not just the new building
- A parking deck to provide adequate parking for faculty, staff and students
- Driving access to the Academy from Oak Grove Road
- Transportation study for the entire Lakeside campus to include traffic, ingress/egress, creation of new walking/biking routes, shuttle locations with dedicated school buses and more

#### *VI. Conclusion*

As the educators, parents, and community members who make up LCS and have both celebrated our successes and dealt with ongoing challenges, we believe LCS, with the support as outlined herein from DCSD, can be a model for what works in Dekalb Schools. But we need to be allowed to work as a cluster and cohesive community, and we need the promised upgrades to our facilities. The deep teaching and learning that

we want and expect for our children cannot happen with LCS facilities as currently constituted. The facilities scoring data and the experiences of facilities users, some of which are shared in this paper, speak to that challenge. LCS schools can accomplish a lot together, but truly ensuring access to great learning experiences is going to take staying together and keeping committed to a unified effort with DCSD. If DCSD can take and act on the feedback communicated here, in particular supporting our 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Academy and delivering the promised ESPLOST facilities funds, we can commit to a continued high level of involvement and support from all of our LCS members in planning and implementation.

## Appendix 1 (Traffic Notes)

Both the traffic data and the historical experience of residents of LCS militate strongly against any proposal that would force driving out of the community and onto already busy roadways. The following data is instructive:

### *Briarcliff High School Site:*

1. Traffic is heavily congested in both directions along N. Druid Hills Road at both I-85 as well as the intersection with Briarcliff Road.
  - Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) 2015 traffic counts indicate that during the 6am – 9am AM peak period, there was an average of almost 9,500 vehicles traveling in the north and south bound directions through the N. Druid Hills Road / Briarcliff Road intersection.<sup>3</sup>
  - Additionally, GDOT reports an average 970 trucks passing through this intersection each day in 2015. This number increased 3.6% from the previous year.
  - The N. Druid Hills Rd / Briarcliff Rd intersection is often listed in the Top 10 Most Dangerous Intersections in Metro Atlanta.<sup>4</sup>
  - In July, 2015, GDOT posted an interactive map showing that 13 crashes occurred at this intersection in one month.<sup>5</sup> Ample GDOT data reveals the hazards of this intersection.
  - This location is not walkable or bikeable for the vast majority of the student population which does not align with DeKalb County Transportation Vision and Goals enhancing walkability and increasing alternative transportation options.
2. The new Emory Sports Facility at N. Druid Hills Rd / I-85 covers ~ 60 acres and is projected to have 400,000 square feet of facility space. Additionally, CHOA is planning a new hospital with 300,000 square feet of space across the street. These are major traffic generators and must be considered in any future school siting along N. Druid Hills Road.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://geocounts.com/gdot/>

<sup>4</sup>#9 -- <http://www.wsbtv.com/news/local/metro-atlantas-worst-intersections-are-outside-per/26911787>

#6 -- <https://www.northmetrotrafficschool.com/defensive-driving-course/the-8-most-dangerous-intersections-in-atlanta-1-2.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ajc.com/news/local/investigates-metro-atlanta-most-dangerous-intersections-are/gZzf2zFdu6rUnOGerTD5BK/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.bizjournals.com/atlanta/news/2016/04/05/emory-acquires-60-acres-at-north-druid-hills-and-i.html>

*Lakeside High School:*

1. Traffic in the Briarcliff Road corridor is congested in the AM and PM peak periods with additional gridlock at school let-out in the afternoon.
  - a. GDOT 2016 traffic counts at Briarcliff Road just south of Woodwardia Road (at Lakeside) show that 3,300 vehicles pass through this area between 6am – 9am with just over 2,000 vehicles passing by Lakeside in the 7am – 8am hour. Between 3pm – 6pm, over 4,100 vehicles were counted at this site with the largest percentage in the 3pm – 4pm hour corresponding with school dismissal.<sup>7</sup>
  - b. The average daily traffic counted at this site increased 7.69% from the previous year.
  - c. Significant traffic calming / off-site parking / alternative transportation measures must be considered with a 750 seat addition. These are noted above.

As one LCS parent with a child at Lakeside who had graduated from Sagamore Hills ES wrote, "...we do not want [ESPLOST] to be used as a way to break us from [the] Lakeside cluster and community and ship us to schools miles away across horrific Atlanta traffic. We live within 1-2 miles of Lakeside and our children are a part of this community. ...We also want [DCSD] to take a long and deep look at the problem with Atlanta traffic and the need to keep schools local so that we can actually get to our kids and allow them to participate in extracurricular activities.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://geocounts.com/gdot/>

## Appendix II (FCA, FEAA, and Capacity Data)

In addition to the capacity projections addressed in this report, our LCS schools have acute facilities needs. The following reports from LCS schools track the facilities scoring, and together indicate a gap between the goal and the reality of high quality, safe and positive learning environments for all of our students. Many of the schools, in short, are outdated, dilapidated and in generally bad condition.

Facility/School	Type	FCA	FEAA	Enrollment	Capacity	Percentage Capacity
Henderson Mill ES	ES	27	50.18	603	550	109.64%
Briarlake ES	ES	35.8	66.99	401	473	84.78%
Hawthorne ES	ES	37.03	69.40	452	464	97.41%
Oak Grove ES	ES	48.87	68.29	580	618	93.85%
Sagamore Hills ES	ES	50.65	77.44	375	472	79.45%
Pleasantdale ES	ES	53.09	72.32	770	697	110.47%
Henderson MS	MS	65.2	70.89	1,609	1198	134.31%
Evansdale ES	ES	71.48	71.42	572	604	94.70%
Warren Technical School	Educ_Other	72.06	69.67		255	
Margaret Harris Comprehensive School	Educ_Other	78.41	58.51		142	
Coralwood Center	Educ_Other	79.91	65.75	234	265	88.30%
Lakeside HS	HS	90.72	83.17	2,123	1756	120.90%

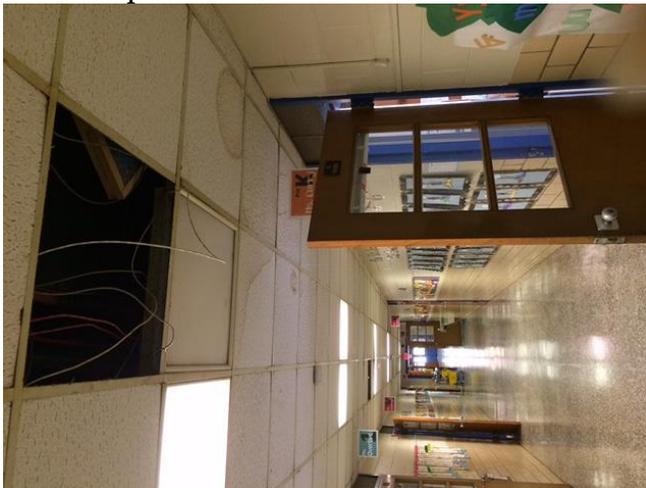
### Representative reports from the community:

In allocating ESPLOST V funds, it is helpful to understand the “on the ground” implications of these quality shortfalls. Examples include:

- “...my children have had classes in outdated buildings throughout their passage through Sagamore and Henderson Mill Middle School. While Sagamore is mostly in serviceable condition, the Gym area does not have air conditioning and the bathrooms appear to have not been updated since the mid-seventies. Also I live within a mile of the school and therefore my child does not have bus service. Unfortunately, my child cannot walk to school because there is a large section of Alderbrook Rd that does not have sidewalks. Cars frequently fly down Alderbrook around hidden curves. A new sidewalk on Alderbrook for children

who live so close to school is an important safety measure that the county should implement.

- “At Henderson, my child informed me that the HVAC systems frequently did not function and that a great number of classes were held in trailers. She said there were days when the school was literally freezing.”
- “The leaking ceilings at Oak Grove Elementary are a major safety hazard for our faculty, staff, and students. Large trashcans (and the smaller blue ones next to it in the picture) must be placed in the hallways to catch the "waterfalls" that constantly appear. These are an obstruction that block the hallway and could prevent a safe exit if there were a fire or another reason we had to evacuate the building quickly. In addition, the exposed wires hanging from the ceiling directly above a water-filled trashcan cannot be ignored any longer. Also note all of the unsightly water-stained ceiling tiles. This problem has been occurring for years, and will continue unless Oak Grove can get a major overhaul or complete replacement of our HVAC system.”
- An Oak Grove parent reported that a child had actually slipped in a puddle of water from the leaking HVAC system during the annual Holiday concert. (Pictures attached of the leaking puddles and buckets)
- From Henderson Mill Elementary school, we have pictures of broken walls in the bathrooms, outdated HVAC systems and general disrepair around the school. The infrastructure of Henderson Mill is in need of immediate and long term repair.





At Sagamore Hills, rusting and aged playground equipment, dating from approximately twenty years ago (installed around 1993-1995), is increasingly unsafe. The school nurse, Jeanne Johnson, reports that the aged playground equipment has been a cause of many injuries, including numerous head injuries and broken bones due to falling from the monkey bars. They have inappropriate ground cover beneath them, i.e., a layer of mulch rather than protective material of appropriate depth. Parent reports confirm the problems; one notes that “[t]he old, dilapidated, outdated equipment is a safety issue and needs attention and replacement to bring it up to the standards of a DeKalb County playground.” Representative photos follow of breaking, rusted or otherwise unsafe equipment.



