

The Board of Supervisors

County Administration Building
651 Pine Street, Room 106
Martinez, California 94553

John Gioia, 1st District
Candace Andersen, 2nd District
Mary N. Piepho, 3rd District
Karen Mitchoff, 4th District
Federal D. Glover, 5th District

Contra Costa County



David Twa
Clerk of the Board
and
County Administrator
(925) 335-1900

March 31, 2015

Senator Marty Block, Co-Chair
Education and Budget and Fiscal Review
Subcommittee No. 1 on Education.
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

Senator Carol Liu, Co-Chair
Education and Budget and Fiscal Review
Subcommittee No. 1 on Education.
State Capitol, Room 2083
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: February 18, 2015 Joint Informational Hearing: K-12 School Facility Program: History, Current Status, and Future Options.

Dear Senator Block and Senator Liu:

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors is writing to thank you for convening the recent Joint Informational Hearing on the K-12 School Facility Program. We appreciate the testimony provided by Mr. Bill Savidge, Assistant Executive Officer of the State Allocation Board. We agree with Mr. Savidge regarding the need to increase bicycle and pedestrian safety in school areas and that school construction should not be driving sprawl. These issues have been a concern of Contra Costa County for some time.

We have been attempting to communicate our concerns to state and local staff regarding school siting policies and practices. In very short summary:

- 1) Our experience is that State staff generally believes it is the responsibility of local jurisdictions to ensure the development of well-sited and safe schools. In contrast, local school district representatives generally believe they merely follow State policies relative to siting and design.
- 2) The State has produced several planning documents that substantiate the safety and land use concerns of the County and Mr. Savidge, (these documents were referred to in the February 18 Joint Hearing materials). However, when discussing the issue with State staff, there is often no acknowledgement of any problem with school siting practices.

This gap in responsibility and lack of acknowledgement of a problem has resulted in schools being developed that are inconsistent with state and local policies relative to safe routes to school, public health, climate change principles and orderly land development. Careful attention should be paid to ensure that this gap does not ultimately compromise any mechanism that is put in place to address issues with school siting and safety.

The County acknowledges that most school facilities are well-sited and designed with accommodation for safe, multi-modal access. The County further acknowledges that the school facilities program must be able to deliver sites in an expeditious, predictable manner. **However, a policy which assigns clear responsibility for confirming that schools are designed for safe access and consistent with other applicable policies is greatly needed.**

Please find attached the County's draft white paper, the *California School Siting and Safety Initiative*, which we are using during outreach efforts on this issue. The white paper identifies issues of concern and contains a discussion of potential policy solutions. Also attached find our previous communication to Superintendent Torlakson which expands on our concerns summarized above.

The Board of Supervisors appreciates your attention to this matter. We look forward to reviewing any proposal the State has in order to address the aforementioned issues.

Sincerely,

John M. Gioia, Chair
Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
Supervisor, District I

C: Contra Costa County State Legislative Delegation
Assembly Member Susan Bonilla, Member – State Allocation Board
Assembly Member Patrick O'Donnell, Chair – Assembly Committee on Education
Bill Savidge, SAB Assistant Executive Officer

Enclosures (2)