

2018 Gowanda Central School District Proposed Capital Improvement Project

Commonly Asked Questions:

When was Gowanda CSD's last Capital Improvement Project approved by voters?

November 2009; project completed 2012-13.

How much money is in the current Capital Reserve Fund? \$2,715,397.

This is money that has been put aside for the purpose of a capital project(s) since 2009. This was voter approved during annual vote.

Where does State Aid originate?

State Aid for public schools comes primarily from the State General Fund (approximately 78%) wherein the major revenue source is state taxes (e.g. income and sales). Of the balance of state support for public schools, approximately 10% comes from STAR and 12% comes from a Special Revenue Fund account supported by state lottery, video lottery terminal, and commercial gaming receipts. In contrast, the major source of local revenues for education are the tax levied on residential and commercial properties within the boundaries of each school district (approximately 91%), and non-property tax revenues (**source:** [NYSED, Office of State Aid, 2017-2018 Handbook](#)).

Can the state renege on the State Building Aid?

This could be possible under the correct economic conditions. However, even during the Great Recession, NYS never made any formal attempt at stopping or hindering building aid. The more likely scenario would be the State creating caps on new projects as opposed to impacting existing approved projects. With many schools statewide having existing projects, passing legislation to change financing would be a big problem for elected officials due to the huge negative impact on schools and communities statewide.

What are reserve funds?

The State has provided a mechanism that allows Districts to "save" for future projects, acquisitions, and other allowable purposes. Reserve funds provide a mechanism for legally saving money to finance all or part of future infrastructure, equipment, and other requirements. Reserve funds can also provide a degree of financial stability by reducing reliance on indebtedness to finance capital projects and acquisitions. In uncertain economic times, reserve funds can also provide officials with a budgetary option that can help mitigate the need to cut services or to raise taxes. In good times, money not needed for current purposes can often be set aside in reserves for future use. Reserve funds are important to good financial management.

The Capital Reserve Fund is a restricted fund that can **ONLY** be used for capital improvement, new construction, acquisition, repair, reconstruction which require voter approval.

Will this capital project increase my taxes now or in the future?

No. This project has 0% increase in local taxes. The project will be 100% paid for using a combination of NYS Building Aid, NYS EXCEL Fund, Native American Building Aid and Capital Reserve Fund. All NYS projects require local contribution/or a “down payment.” This will be done through using the Capital Reserve Fund.

Explain the Capital Reserve Contribution.

The District’s Capital Reserve Fund is a legal mechanism that allows the District to “save” money for future capital projects like the currently proposed one. Good financial management over the past several years has allowed the District to save money into this reserve fund account, plus other reserve accounts. This reserve fund money is used to provide the local share of any project and prevents the need to cut programs or raise taxes. Due to good planning, this project requires no additional taxes to the community. This reserve fund, like the others, is designed to be used and not designed to act as a perpetual saving account. The Capital Reserve Fund is created by voter approval. The current Capital Reserve Fund was created by voter approval in 2009. The current fund can be extended with voter approval and/or a new fund can be established for future projects with voter approval. In any scenario, The Capital Reserve Fund will be replenished with continued responsible fiscal management for the next capital project need.

Why don’t we spend this money on academic programs?

This Capital Reserve Fund is specifically earmarked by law for capital improvements projects, new construction, acquisition, repair, reconstruction, etc. This can not be used for teacher salaries, programs, extracurricular activities, etc.

How does this project affect academics?

New secure entrances provide additional safety and security. Safe learning environments are the foundation for successful schools. Newly renovated classrooms will provide updated and modern instructional space for art, family/consumer science and technology. Renovated spaces will provide venues for best teaching and learning practices. The proposed renovated libraries (using current Middle School and High School library space) will provided a modern, 21st century libraries for students to work. Excessive temperature impacts learning per recent research. Overall, the project helps maintain a positive school climate and educational experience.

Why are we replacing the bridge?

The District owns Panther Bridge. The NYS Department of Transportation placed on yellow structural flag on the bridge in October 2013. The report indicated the following condition: **“End Abutment Stem Pile #5 has 43% Begin face flange section loss and 18% End face flange section.”** **Flag designation can be withdrawn if one of the following actions were taken: 1. Close 2. Post for reduced load or 3. Repair.** This bridge is a major District transportation route. The bridge handles school bus and school traffic on a daily basis, requiring the bridge to be structurally safe and sound. In addition, there is a lack of pedestrian-vehicular separation and the narrowness limits traffic flow and can be dangerous in the winter.

Why is the climate control needed?

All three buildings struggle with temperature control. In the winter, the current entrances allow cold air to regularly enter the buildings, cooling down large sections. The proposed new entrances with vestibules will help keep out winter air. During the warmer months, temperatures in second floor classrooms reach regularly 88+ degrees. These temperature conditions do not support teaching and learning. Also, HVAC improvements are linked to the security of the buildings. Often first floor classroom windows need opening for cool air. Open windows provide easy access to the classroom/building no matter how secure the entrances maybe structurally.

Is turf necessary to include in this project or can we consider this in the future?

Why turf the baseball/softball fields?

The current baseball/softball fields are over ten years old. These fields need repair and drainage upgrades which are needed regardless of field covering. Whether grass or artificial turf are chosen, the field type would be in place for the next 10+ years. Baseball/softball were chosen to turf first. These are spring sports which depend heavily on the weather. For example, this year teams could not use these fields until mid-April. With an artificial turf, sports teams can begin seasons on time and with less weather dependence. The turf fields can be used all year for other sport practices or community activities. Also, the modern fields may attract local, regional and sectional use beyond simply school use.

Explain the issue with our current entrances.

Our current entrances are unsecure at best. The High School and Elementary School entrances are nearly 50+ years old. These entrances were not designed for modern concerns such as safety. Middle School entrance is more energy efficient but does provide direct access to the building. The design was sufficient when built but concerns have changed since this building was constructed. In the High School and Elementary School, the stainless steel doors do not latch properly with fluctuating temperatures. The metal contracts/expands, requiring regular maintenance. The single set of doors open directly into the building which allows visitors complete access to the entire school complex without having to register at a central, secure location. In addition, the current doors are not energy efficient. For example, in the winter, when the door is opened, winter air cools down large sections of the building.

Why are we relocating and renovating the arts and the fitness center?

All new secure entrances will displace current locations of classrooms. A new High School entrance will require existing offices and classrooms to be relocated. The art classrooms will be relocated in the area where current High School main office is located. Art is a popular program and updated space will provide proper ventilation (or better) for art projects, eg, ceramics, and bring the program close in proximity to the other instructional programs. High School technology classes are relocating to the current weight/fitness center room. This renovated space will be equipped with traditional and clean technology tools as well being located away from major instructional areas for ventilation and noise. The weight/fitness room will be relocated to current art space. This area is directly across from the gym, providing easier supervision and prevent hallway instruction. In addition there will be more convenient access for the community which regularly uses the area.

Was anything cut that was originally considered?

The project scope has changed over the past several years since 2013. Several initial proposals and ideas were removed from the current proposed project such as central library, District Office Renovation, new Board of Education room, climate control in gyms, merging of High School/Middle School technology classes, and expansion of baseball/softball fields at Elementary School. The scope present in September 2018 represents the final draft scope proposal.

Isn't enrollment decreasing? Why should we vote to yes with fewer students?

Over the next ten years, our student population is predicted to decline by approximately 9%. Per NYSED, GCS enrollment projections based on revised current enrollment [9.12.18: 1,119]:

- 18-19: 1,119
- 19-20: 1,097
- 20-21: 1,074
- 21-22: 1,047
- 22-23: 1,045
- 23-24: 1,029
- 24-25: 1,029
- 25-26: 1,030
- 26-27: 1,022
- 27-28: 1,019

However, the students who are in the District are required to be educated and deserve the best educational experiences and opportunities possible.

Is the community voting on exact/precise plans for the Capital Project?

No. The community votes to approve (or not) the entire proposal and associated budget. The current specific plans are artist renditions and examples. Specific designs will be determined after voter approval with input from specific stakeholders and design experts.

How long will the project take to complete?

Once the project is approved by the community, NY Department of Education must approve the plans which may take up to 55 weeks to obtain or expedited approval is possible. After approval, bids must be received for the project. However, this process likely can be done in spring 2019. Ideally, groundbreaking may take place during Spring/Summer 2020 and the entire project is slated for completion within two years. However, weather and other unanticipated events may delay this proposed timeline.

What are the plans for the bus garage?

Plans include replacement of a vehicle lift along with lighting, heating and ventilation improvements.

Are there any technology aspects still included in the project?

Only plans for technology upgrades are in the bus garage, improving security and wifi access.

When can the public expect to vote for this project?

Once Board of Education formally approves project, there is a minimum of 45 days from approval to community vote. If this process goes as planned, an early-mid December 2018 vote is planned.

Does the public have any say in what is done for the project or is it completely decided by the District?

It is the BOE responsibility to design, facilitate and authorize for public vote the proposed project. Community members can approve/disapprove by their vote. Once project is approved, various stakeholders will be invited for planning the specific design of the new construction.

Is the project “all or nothing” e.g., turf and construction?

This depends on how the BOE decides to present the project to the community. The project could be presented in one or multiple propositions.

Will the bus garage be impacted by construction time on the bridge?

Likely. Staging of construction will likely occur when school is not in session, e.g., summer, for minimal disruption to the bus garage and transportation.

What is our security now?

Our buildings were designed for a different time. This design is outdated for modern security concerns. New construction will make entry into the building difficult and control the flow of visitors

more appropriately. Plus, the current entrance are not energy efficient and, in the HS and ES, old aluminum door frames contract/expand with heat, making opening and closing extremely difficult.

What will the community get out of this project?

#1: Safety: a new bridge that is dependable and safe to travel on for years to come; schools that are structurally secure, reasonably comfortable and more energy efficient - safe and comfortable learning environment for students. Also, enhancing instructional spaces or educating students; outside work to make fields more accessible as well as fields that can be regularly used by students and community.