

Dear School Board Members and Staff:

The Arlington Forest Citizens Association formally requests that Arlington Public Schools (APS) maintain the current high school attendance boundary zones of Arlington Forest neighborhood planning units (1201, 1202, and 1203) for Washington-Lee High School.

The Arlington Forest Citizens Association (AFCA) recognizes that the current population trend has created new challenges. We are committed to working with APS to ensure that all students in Arlington receive high quality teaching and learning experiences via “right-sized” classroom size, diverse school environment, access to rigorous curriculum, and high expectations for all. We appreciate the opportunity to be part of the solution to solve the over-capacity issue we face, particularly in the high schools.

Keeping the Arlington Forest neighborhood planning units (1201, 1202, and 1203) intact for Washington-Lee High School incorporates the 6 criteria established for recommended boundary changes in the APS Boundary Policy:

1. Proximity - Planning units **1201, 1202, and 1203** are a short, safe walking and biking distance from Washington-Lee (W-L), with portions within the 1.5 mile walk zone. While some students just beyond the walk zone do have a bus option, they also enjoy quick access to a paved bike trail through parkland, safely navigating within blocks of W-L. This proximity not only provides students safe and easy access to school, but it also allows parents an easy and efficient path to shuttle students to and from extracurricular activities before and after the work day. In contrast, these units are 2.8-3.0 miles away from Wakefield - twice as far as W-L. Moreover, reassigning these units to Wakefield would require students and parents to navigate two major and busy thoroughfares in Arlington - Route-50 and George Mason Blvd - making it unsafe to walk or bike ride to school (especially with expected overflow usage when I-66 construction begins). Importantly, the APS Facilities Advisory Committee Report (May 17, 2016) offered a number of solutions, but none involved reassigning units 1201, 1202, and 1203 from W-L to Wakefield.
2. Efficiency - Continuing to keep units **1201, 1202, and 1203** within the W-L boundary zones will reduce future capital and operating costs because the current proximity will allow many students to walk or bike to school with limited bus and other transportation costs, including added traffic congestion and associated pollutants. Reassigning these units to Wakefield will require funding for all students to ride the bus daily.
3. Alignment - Arlington Forest planning units **1201, 1202, and 1203** are three of eight units zoned for Barrett Elementary School. Currently, these students spend six years together in elementary school, are split up for three years in middle school, but then come back together at W-L for high school. Under the proposed boundary changes, however, this neighborhood student group will be fractured even further between the two high schools —and some students will have little to no consistency in their class make-up because of that fracturing. APS should strive to keep student and neighborhood groups together as much as possible. The students in these units should all be assigned to the nearest high school to satisfy this alignment criterion for boundary change proposals and avoid (as much as possible) separating groups of students from their friends and classmates. It only makes sense to

continue sending the Arlington Forest planning units to W-L given the school's safe walking and biking distance, as discussed above.

4. Stability - Given that APS expects more comprehensive boundary changes in 2020-21, the School Board should not change the current high school assignment for units **1201, 1202, and 1203** at this time. Maintaining the current assignment would allow students to continue walking or biking to the closer W-L while simultaneously giving APS the freedom in a few short years to consider other, more practical and safer options without destabilizing families' expectations in planned attendance areas a second time in five years.
5. Contiguity - Maintaining the W-L assignment for units **1201, 1202, and 1203** also makes sense because the neighborhood's northern border is 100% contiguous with planning units that are indicated to remain within the W-L zone in this current boundary change process. The units' southern border is defined by Arlington Boulevard/Route-50, forming a contiguous and commonsense boundary.
6. Demographics - Based on the online interactive map tool, it is not clear how much demographic diversity the School Board would achieve by upending the current boundaries to move these three units from W-L to Wakefield. In fact, the options under the current boundary refinement process only exacerbate the acute diversity problem at Yorktown without solving the problem at Wakefield. If demographic diversity is the goal, APS should look to balance demographics in a more comprehensive boundary proposal in 2020-21 across all three high schools, including Yorktown.

In addition to these 6 criteria set forth by APS, retaining the Arlington Forest planning units 1201, 1202, and 1203 for Washington-Lee includes additional benefits. There is an economic benefit gained by having Arlington Forest families and students walk/bike through Ballston to Washington-Lee High School. The increased foot traffic through Ballston promotes and aligns with business interest and economic development. Driving to Wakefield does not promote any business or economic interest in Arlington, but only increases traffic and congestion.

We respectfully ask that the School Board maintain the Arlington Forest planning units **1201, 1202, and 1203** to remain in the W-L zone.

Arlington Forest Citizens Association

October 2016