

November 20, 2025

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS SUBCOMMITTEE

**Virtual Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee Report
Thursday, November 20, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.
Broadcast from the Media Studio
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA**

Called for the purpose of reviewing start times of schools in the context of transportation logistics, reviewing lottery and transfer data as part of identifying trends of under chosen schools and sharing updates of Spring St improvements.

Subcommittee Members Present: Member Rojas, (Chair), Member Hudson, Member Rachel

Other Members Present: Vice Chair Hunter

Others Present: Vedad Konjic, Director of Facilities; David Murphy, Superintendent of Schools; Jaclyn Piques, Director of Communications; Damon Smith, Interim Chief Operating Officer

Chair Rojas started the meeting at 5:31 p.m. and opened the meeting by asking participants to share what they are looking forward to eating for Thanksgiving.

Chair Rojas read the call of the meeting and went over the agenda.

Chair Rojas highlighted the agreements of the meeting (below):

- Speak and listen from the heart (respect)
- Step up/step back (watch air time)
- Expect and accept non-closure (work in progress)
- Bike rack (list of things that are important but should be addressed another time)
- Public comment would be limited to 3 minutes to allow for a broader discussion.

Chair Rojas turned the meeting over to Superintendent Murphy and Damon Smith who presented the following slides regarding updates on the 158 Spring Street improvements. The presentation can be found on this [website](#).

During the presentation, Superintendent Murphy and Mr. Smith shared the following highlights regarding the 158 Spring Street project and transportation updates:

- The appointment of WT Rich as the construction manager for the 158 Spring Street project.
- The projected timeline for the construction and key milestones.
- Addressing community questions, including financial implications and accessibility improvements.
- The interconnection between transportation and school start times, with a focus on improving on-time performance for students.
- Approximately 3,500 students are transported via the CPS transportation system.
- Between 34 and 36 large school buses are in use (about 35 buses running in the morning and 35 in the afternoon).
- About 75 vans/mini-buses are used for specialized, door-to-door, McKinney-Vento, and out-of-district transportation.
- The challenges of the current start time system, including late arrivals and the impact on students, are discussed.

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- Possible solutions, such as consolidating start times and improving route optimization, are considered.
- The financial implications of changes, including the cost of additional busses and the impact on staff, are addressed.

Member Rachel appreciated the clear overview from the superintendent and COO, noting she had not yet seen a concrete recommendation on start times and valued continuing the process thoughtfully and transparently. **Member Hudson** thanked the superintendent, COO, and Damon Smith for his hands-on work with transportation. She asked about the impact of route reductions or restructuring on bus needs, costs, and staff schedules, and raised concerns about road construction affecting bus routes, urging coordination with the City to schedule major work outside school hours. **Member Weinstein** thanked Mr. Smith and Superintendent Murphy for the transportation update and bus-riding efforts, and expressed appreciation for regular, clear transportation updates.

Chair Rojas opened the floor for public comment. Given the time constraints, each speaker was allotted three minutes. The following caregivers, Anne Coburn and Jamie Lichtenstein shared the following sentiments:

- Concerns about the 158 Spring Street project timeline, budget, scope, and funding allocations, and potential impacts of city financial changes.
- Questions about project management, communication, building use during renovations, accessibility, asbestos, and programming decisions.
- Inquiry on the next Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee meeting.
- Clarification on the sequencing of program and facilities decisions and alignment with design and construction.
- Concerns about programming for the KLO space and need for updated lottery data to guide program placement.
- Concerns about out-of-district transportation performance and CPS data on on-time performance.
- Follow-up on last year's start-time survey and the need for clear early spring communication about potential changes.
- Concerns about NRT van inefficiencies and requests for CPS to address scheduling issues.

Superintendent Murphy noted that detailed out-of-district transportation data was not available that evening, acknowledged performance issues, attributed them primarily to vendor challenges (NRT, workforce, operations) rather than systemic start-time structures, and stated that detailed data could be provided later.

Chair Rojas turned the meeting over to Superintendent Murphy who presented School Choice Policy.

The following highlights included:

- The importance of maintaining socioeconomic balance in schools and the challenges of low demand for certain programs.
- Suggestions for improving the presentation and publication of school choice data are made, including providing more detailed information and addressing underlying issues.
- The importance of proactive communication and providing affirmative information about schools.

Member Rachel requested detailed lottery data (1st–3rd choices) and asked how the committee can monitor SES balance annually. She emphasized support for controlled choice to prevent economic and racial segregation and highlighted the value of magnet-like options. **Member Hudson** stressed presenting

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data clearly, reflecting entry-year demand, program size, and sharing it with families before the lottery. She noted under-chosen schools like KLO and urged pairing data with proactive communication to avoid negative perceptions. **Chair Rojas** emphasized using lottery and transfer data to identify under-chosen schools and guide support. He noted the importance of collaboration between the committee and administration and requested published data highlight low-demand schools, transfer patterns, and their link to program/enrollment decisions.

Chair Rojas closed the meeting at 7:00 p.m. by thanking participants.