

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

August 3, 2021 St. Louis Bond Proposal

1. Will our tax rate change with a yes vote?

No, our current bond rate is 8.0 mills, and would stay the same at 8.0 mills with the approval of our voters.

2. You have the bond proposal at \$15.58 million. Will this take care of all of our needs?

No, but it will provide many, many needed upgrades for our students for many years to come. Passing this bond proposal would not take care of all our needs forever. Our goal would be to prioritize the facility needs, then academic needs and finally extracurricular needs.

This is an opportunity to continue to invest in our greatest community resource, our schools. Now is a very unique time that we can do it without raising people's tax rate. The complete list of work to be accomplished can be accessed on the school website.

3. What is the cost over the term of the bond issue?

The tax rate would stay the same tax rate from the previous year (8.0 mills to 8.0 mills). The millage rate is scheduled to decrease 3.0 mills. This issue is 3.0 mills for zero net change.

4. I see the ballot language, but what are the other numbers indicating?

In the State of Michigan, voters approve school bond questions by the dollar amount. This issue is asking our voters to approve \$15.58M. School elections are different from county or township issues in that voters are asked to approve a specific millage rate such as 0.5 mills for the county library.

5. What are the benefits to area townships in the school district?

Great communities and great schools are one in the same. By taking advantage of continued investment in our schools, all of our communities are positively affected. Facility upgrades would increase enrollment and increase the property values within the St. Louis Public School district. Many of the proposed improvements would be preventative in nature, and extend out the life of the facilities.

6. I am retired, what benefit does passing this do for me?

Public schools within the community are sustained and maintained financially by the local taxpayers. Retired community members benefit from this passing with school-community outreach programs, increasing property values, and the overall economic viability to the local community.

7. What are the benefits to our community in passing this bond proposal?

The community already invests in their school buildings annually. It is vital that we continue to support preventative maintenance measures to keep our students safe, comfortable, and socially supported within their learning community. Moreover, benefits include increased property values, the local economy from enrollment, and the pride in our community. Quality schools absolutely affect the quality of life for all of our citizens.

8. If the bond passes, when will work begin?

Work would begin the 2021-2022 school year.

9. *When will the work be completed by?*

Work would be completed by 2026. We are required to spend 85% of the bond proceeds in the first three years and all work will need to be completed within 5 years.

10. *Why is the bond proposal important to our school district?*

The bond proposal is important to our school district and communities because we have many projects, and facility upgrades that need attention. We have a special opportunity to keep the tax rate the same from the current year and raise \$15.58M to continue to reinvest and protect our communities' largest asset.

11. *Are the proposed improvements in alignment with the District's overall Mission and Goals?*

Yes, the proposed improvements are aligned with the District's overall Mission and Goals. The current Mission is to prepare literate, career and college ready graduates. The Bond will assist with facility, security, and technology upgrades to assist SLPS in preparing our students to be well-rounded citizens.

12. *What is the long term vision for the school district and its buildings?*

The St. Louis Public School's long term vision is to always focus on student learning, and provide opportunities for students to become college and career ready. Creating and being accountable to a preventative maintenance schedule is one of those tools, which will be followed to make sure our facilities are maintained.

13. *What process did the district use for this bond request?*

We started with many of the needs that were not financially possible from the previous bond proposals. In 2019 we conducted an in-depth detailed facility study as well surveyed stakeholders. Based on the results we prioritized projects that meet the needs of our district and community using the following parameters:

- Safe and secure facilities for staff and students
- Upgrade/update aging systems to extend useful life and improve operational efficiencies
- Improvements to air quality in all buildings and classrooms
- K-12 and community focused
- Improvements for students and staff technology to meet the 21st-Century learning needs of our students.
- Improvements to promote optimal learning environments
- Enhancements in the areas of science, agriculture science, and skilled trades
- Enhancements to build and promote performing arts and extra-curriculars

15. *Does the Board of Education support the proposal?*

Yes, all Board members support the proposal.

16. *What is the Board doing to support this proposal?*

Board members are having dialogue with the community, participating in, and informing the public of this very special opportunity.

17. *How would the money be used? (by percentage)*

Carrie Knuase Elementary - 12%
Nikkari Elementary- 15%
TSN Middle School & Athletic Complex - 29%
St. Louis High School- 28%
Westgate - 3%
Camp Monroe – 3%

Transportation/Maintenance Garage- 8%

18. Please share building by building improvements

<https://www.stlouisschools.net/>

19. What security enhancements will be made?

We will be finishing the electronic key entry ways throughout the District. Secure vestibules at the high school and middle school (they already exists at our elementary buildings) Our end-of-life security cameras throughout the district will also be replaced with these funds.

20. What kind of energy and cost saving improvements are planned?

Energy efficient lighting, high efficiency mechanical equipment, roofs, boiler replacement, high quality water replacement are primary improvements that are planned for upgrades to energy savings.

21. Why not use the district's operating budget to fund the needs listed in the proposal?

The priorities of the operating budget is education. The focus will always be on students and staff and all of the operating needs to promote education. The State of Michigan does not provide infrastructure funding like the State of Ohio and Indiana does. The facility needs are too many, and are significant enough in cost that we would not be able to cover the cost of the projects. We have been general funds to maintain our facilities over the past few years.

22. How are neighboring school districts addressing the aging conditions of their school buildings?

Many of our neighboring, similar districts have either recently passed a bond for their k-12 districts or are having a bond election in the near future.

24. Will bond dollars be used for staff salaries or other district expenses?

By law, **NO** bond funds can be used for staff salaries or other district operating expenses.

25. If the bond proposal is passed, what are the next steps?

We would be working with our Building Management team to assist us in getting competitive bids for these projects. Bids would then be analyzed by the Board of Education then awarded. Contractors would then start and complete the projects.

26. Will special emphasis be placed on hiring local contractors and suppliers?

We always encourage local contractors to bid on the proposals as this assists our local economy and supports our businesses.

27. How can we be assured that the District won't be asking for additional improvements {bond issues} in the future?

We believe that with this bond proposal that we will fulfill the facility needs of the district over the next eight to ten years at least. We certainly want to be fiscally responsible with the general fund, and maintain a healthy positive annual budget.

28. What is the plan to keep facility improvement disruptions to a minimum?

Within our current plan we have made sure to develop continuous goals on preventative maintenance for the facilities.

29. What is the Michigan Homestead Property Tax Credit?

It is a tax credit that you get on your State of Michigan income tax return based on the amount of property tax you pay relative to your adjusted gross income. The net effect of the credit would be to reduce your overall tax burden.

- 30. What are the key dates leading up to the vote?**
Absentee ballots are available on June 19, 2021, and the election is on August 3, 2021.
- 31. What is the procedure for absentee voting?**
Citizens can contact their Clerk to register, and if they so choose sign up for an absentee ballot. This is then sent to their home so that they can vote with instructions on the ballot.
- 32. Will there be additional public meetings to learn more about the bond proposal?**
Yes, we will be having community forums to get feedback and input to prioritize the needs for the bond proposal items.
- 33. How can I request a district representative to speak at a neighborhood, service club or business organization?**
Feel free to contact Jennifer McKittrick at (989) 681-2545 or jmckittrick@stlouisschools.net
- 34. Who may I contact if I have additional questions?**
Feel free to contact Jennifer McKittrick at (989) 681-2545, or jmckittrick@stlouisschools.net
- 35. Where is the best place to find information out about the bond issue?**
The best place to find information about the bond proposal would be the St. Louis website at <https://www.stlouisschools.net/>.
We also have an informational flyer outlining the work to be completed.
Furthermore, we have a Quick Response (QR) code that provides a direct link to all work to be completed as well as additional information regarding the bond question.
- 36. Why are the bonds being paid off in 11 years, 6 months (rounded up to 12 years on the ballot)?**
Most K-12 school district bonds average in length from 25 years to 30 years. It was important to the Board of Education to have a much shorter pay-back period. This saves significant interest dollars compared to a longer term. This is fiscally responsible.
- 37. What happens if the bond doesn't pass?**
The State of Michigan, unlike our neighboring states of Indiana and Ohio, does not provide K-12 schools infrastructure funding (yet colleges & universities do). Our State requires K-12's to seek local approval of their voters to raise construction funding.
- 38. I have heard that we are declining in enrollment. Why don't we close some of the schools?**
We have been slightly declining in enrollment in recent years, however as we evaluate this variable annually we are not at a point to where we could close a building based on our current enrollment.
- 40. Why are there so many roof replacements?**
Roofs are a basic need for our schools, our houses, and our work. Because schools are so large, they are very expensive to replace and are at end of life. If we don't replace them now that they are out of warranty, we will have to redirect dollars from the classroom towards maintenance.
- 42. We are declining in enrollment. Why do we need to do anything?**
We are dedicated to providing a world-class learning environment for our students. We are also committed to maintaining and improving our facilities over time, especially since some of these larger projects have not been addressed in 25 years. Yes, we have passed bond proposals over the past 50 years, however there have been other needs prioritized at those given times within the District's history.

- 43. *What happens if the Proposal fails?***
These upgrades would not occur. The district would have to seek approval again from our voters.
- 44. *How will the actual bond proposal appear on the ballot?***
The voters will be asked to approve the dollar amount of \$15,580,000. The tax rate will not increase with a yes vote. The millage rate would stay the same.
- 45. *How much debt does our district currently have?***
As of Election Day, the current school debt will be \$9,290,000.
- 46. *How many school districts in the state have school debt?***
77% of Michigan's public school districts have qualified debt approved by the Department of Treasury. Other school districts have non-qualified debt but this type of debt is not secured, approved, and backed up by the State of Michigan.
- 47. *A YES vote typically means that you support a proposal. Is that the case in this election?***
Correct.
- 48. *Why now?***
The District has intentionally waited until infrastructure funds can be raised without raising the tax rate. We can now continue to upgrade our schools without increasing the tax rate. If we wait until later, it will increase the tax rate for our taxpayers.
- 50. *Why is the bond proposal being put out in August 2021 as opposed to May 2021, or November 2021?***
As our taxes fall off this year, the August 3, 2021 election would be the last time we could have our tax rate remain the same from the previous year. By voting this August, our taxpayers would not have a tax rate increase. If we vote later than August, 2021, any proposal would increase the tax rate.
- 51. *What are the lengths of the bonds? Since this is similar to our house mortgage, for how many years will it be?***
This bond will be paid off in 11 years, 6 months. Election law requires the years to be rounded up so on the ballot it will indicate 12 years.
- 52. *Will the school district use the federal stimulus (ESSER) funds to help save the taxpayers' dollars?***
Yes, the federal government allows schools to use these grant funds in very specific, approved ways. We have to submit for approval but plan on maximizing the stimulus funds to save our taxpayers dollars.