Hamilton County School Board

Parent Committee Briefing



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Letter to the School Board

Dear School Board Members,

As you are aware, the Parent Committee met with the Hamilton County Department of Education to discuss the proposed rezoning of the East Hamilton County. Since Chairman Evatt created the Parent Committee, three official meetings were held. It appears we are not making progress with the HCDE administrative staff, so we feel it is essential to report directly to you with our findings and data.

The Parent Committee worked in good faith with the HCDE staff to achieve the best outcome for everyone involved. We approached these meetings with an open mind and with the ultimate goal to do what is best for our school system and our children, not just what appears to be right for right now. We were told from the onset that none of the lines could be redrawn and we were informed upfront that portables were not an option. We were also told that the elementary rezoning for the East Brainerd area could not be put on hold. Essentially, we were told to give them a magic bullet when one doesn't exist. We shared our concerns with the proposed plan and instead of refuting our concerns with facts and research; they simply told us that they know what they are doing. We quickly discovered that we were not there to provide our input to craft a solution but rather our attendance was perfunctory to give the illusion of community involvement.

During our three meetings with the staff we had multiple question and answer sessions as each party tried to understand the other's point of view. We repeatedly requested that an agenda be created and a timeline of events be established. To date, neither has been provided. We unfortunately concluded that while Chairman Evatt created this committee in good faith, the HCDE staff did not act in the same manner so that a well-rounded proposal could be crafted that takes into account what's best for the children of Hamilton County.

The members of the Parent Committee want the best for our children and for every child in Hamilton County. Regrettably, this proposed rezoning fails to take into account necessary variables so the result will likely cause more problems in our area. We will show you that pursuant to this proposal Ooltewah High School will become overcrowded sooner rather than later. The elementary schools will over-correct the problem and drive an unnecessary \$5 million proposed addition at Wolftever Elementary that could be better used elsewhere in the county.

This briefing is designed to share our ideas, concerns and data (provided by the HCDE) that clearly shows that the overcrowding problem is not being resolved. We will be very open and honest about what we believe are the best options to deliver a premium education to the children of Hamilton County. The attached is by far not complete; it was constructed in a short period of time with limited resources. We are not professionals but have worked hard to provide you with this briefing. Please contact any of us if you have questions or want further information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

The Parent Committee



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Executive Summary

East Hamilton County has experienced record growth over the past decade. While the growth, economically, is wonderful for our region, East Hamilton County's infrastructure, including our schools, has not kept pace with the additional needs created by the current, or future, growth.

As a result of this growth, the elementary schools in East Hamilton County and the new East Hamilton Middle-High School have become overcrowded. Our committee also believes that the overcrowding has occurred because decisions on school construction were made in the past by not using relevant data that included growth projections for the area. The current proposal perpetuates the problem by not factoring the above-average growth expected in East Hamilton County, especially in Ooltewah and Apison.

The parent committee is presenting an alternative proposal to the HCBE members because of a lack of progress getting the administration at HCDE to revise their rezoning proposal. This is a serious step and is recognized as being necessary to the well-being and education of the children

The current HCDE rezoning proposal does not factor in growth of the affected areas nor relative school performance and thus does not accurately represent the impact to the students and community. The plan also ignores or downplays many contradicting arguments relating to proximity and capacity. The prospect of future rezoning due to the failures of the HCDE proposal is not an acceptable alternative given that we now recognize the issue and have options that prevent those failures.

The committee recommends that the HCBE reject the HCDE proposed rezoning.

The committee recommends that the issue of elementary school rezoning be postponed until next year so a thorough analysis can be made of growth in the area, school improvement plans can be evaluated for effectiveness, and broad community involvement can be obtained.

The committee is recommending that the existing East Hamilton Middle/High School zone remain as defined in 2007 and the crowding at East Hamilton be addressed by the use of portable classrooms. The *only* immediate method of relieving the overcrowding at EHMHS is through the use of portables.

The committee is recommends that the facilities plan prioritization of the East Hamilton Middle School construction be reevaluated by the Board. The growth analysis recommended above should provide adequate insight for the decision and the prospect of achieving an effective doubling of the East Hamilton High School capacity at no cost, when the new East Hamilton Middle School is built, should be factored into the final cost benefit analysis.

Thank you for taking the time to review our briefing and for your consideration of the issues we identified. We appreciate your service to our county.



Rezoning – A Big Decision

When the rezoning proposal was announced by the school staff, a group of concerned parents and citizens spontaneously came together initially to protest and subsequently to learn more about the need, the plan and possible alternatives. Looking back we felt like a "deer in the headlights." Many of us had planned for our children to attend specific schools and purchased homes for specific school zones. Others were worried about keeping their children together in the same schools and in the same feeder patterns. Some were troubled about transportation issues of getting their kids to schools that will be further apart and still get to work on time. One thing we learned is that others not affected by the proposed changes did not understand our desperation, our concerns and the difficult decisions that potentially are ahead for many of the affected families.

At the same time, we all realize that school overcrowding is a serious issue that needs to be addressed with a long-term solution so our children can continue to receive the best education possible.

Online searches return hundreds of hits about school zoning problems and similar issues faced by school boards and parents across the country. This is not a new problem but one thing is clear in most every article – rezoning is a big decision that should be approached carefully and judiciously with public input and buy-in. A quick attempt at fixing the overcrowding issue by moving students to different schools without the proper research and data will cause more problems than it solves and, as you will see, will also cause other schools to be overcrowded sooner than later.

We are at this important juncture with our school in Eastern Hamilton County because (1) the excessive growth in this area of the county has brought more students into our schools than expected; (2) construction has not kept up with the growth and (3) decisions were made in the past without accurate data that included reasonable growth projections. Our concern is that we can move forward and make the right long-term decision that will be the best for our children and the school system, but instead it appears we are rushing into this decision without good numbers and especially without any growth projections. We are on a trajectory to repeat the same mistakes made in the past.

We urge our School Board to consider the data we collected and realize this decision affects hundreds of students and their families. The proposed plan is not complete. True capacity and future growth need to be analyzed so you can make the best long term decision for our students and our schools.



Elementary Proposal - Concerns

- The current proposal is rushed. Parents and children alike deserve the best decision, not the fastest decision. This decision can be postponed several months since no changes occur until 2013 for North of I-75 and until 2014 for South of I-75 after the new schools are completed.
 - The current proposal shifts 220 students to Wolftever, a relatively weak academic school, bringing it to 98% of capacity almost overnight. Why not improve the academic performance before adding more students?
 - The shift of students to Wolftever mandates an unnecessary \$5 million addition in Phase 1 of the facilities plan while ignoring existing capacity available in locked-up portables at Westview. These funds are needed elsewhere in the county to update dilapidated facilities.
 - The current proposal does not utilize the most current 2010 census block data. It also fails to utilize Health Department records to estimate the number of children below school registration age future growth that is not being considered. No one knows how many pre-k students, home school students and/or private school students are potentially approaching our school system.
 - Growth projections are not incorporated into the HCDE data for this rezoning proposal.
 - The dividing lines between the school zones are not consistent based on roads.
 - The validations for retaining or moving subdivisions are not consistent.
 - The current proposal was drafted without community involvement; any changes suggested by the Parent Committee were rebuffed.
 - Other examples that are less disruptive (see below) have not been considered.
 - The current proposal splits up families between schools and causes transportation problems. No data has been provided on the increased cost of transporting students further than their current school.



Elementary Capacity Analysis

Data Provided by HCDE - Reframed by Parent Committee

	Capacity		2011-2012 Current Enrollment	% Cap	Zoning Changes	Projected Enrollment	% Cap (Projected)
Name		grade	Total		Total	Total	
Apison Elementary		0	110		-27	83	
Capacity =	600	1	107		-26	81	
		2	113		-30	83	
		3	105		-25	80	
		4	117		-23	94	
		5	99		-20	79	
Apison Elementary			651	109%	-151	500	83%
Birchwood Elementary		0	28		-28	0	
Capacity =		1	19		-19	0	
		2	20		-20	0	
		3	18		-18	0	
		4	24		-24	0	
		5	17		-17	0	
Birchwood Elementary Total			126		-126	0	
East Brainerd		0	127		35	162	
Elementary Capacity =	700	1	118		33	151	
Capacity =	700	2	105		32	137	
		3	122		37	159	
		4	118		38	156	
		5	136		37	173	
East Brainerd Elementary Total			726	104%	212	938	134%
Ooltewah Elementary		0	68		51	119	
Capacity =	434	1	80		33	113	
,,		2	70		37	107	
		3	77		36	113	
		4	90		32	122	
		5	78		35	113	
Ooltewah Elementary Total			463	107%	224	687	158%
Shepherd, Bess T.			00			0.4	
Elementary	550	0	90		-6	84	
Capacity =	559	1	71		-5	66	
		2	102 83		-9 -6	93	
		3	85		-6 -5	77 80	
		5	79		-3	76	
Shepherd, Bess T.			79		-5	/0	
Elementary Total			510	91%	-34	476	85%



Elementary Capacity Analysis – Page 2

Data Provided by HCDE - Reframed by Parent Committee

	Capacity		2011-2012 Current Enrollment	% Cap	Zoning Changes	Projected Enrollment	% Cap (Projected)
Smith, Wallace A. Elementary		0	146		-31	115	
Capacity =	835	1	149		-29	120	
		2	132		-30	102	
		3	138		-27	111	
		4	143		-25	118	
		5	165		-41	124	
Smith, Wallace A. Elementary Total			873	105%	-183	690	83%
C100 F11		_	01			00	
Snow Hill Elementary	575	0	91		8	99	
Capacity =	626	1	93		15	108	
		2	95		13	108	
		3 4	104 84		9 17	113 101	
		5	104		23	101	
Snow HillElementary		3	104		23	127	
Total			571	91%	85	656	105%
Westview Elementary		0	150		-40	110	
Capacity =	600	1	113		-36	77	
		2	110		-30	80	
		3	120		-45	75	
		4	136		-43	93	
		5	143		-42	101	
Westview Elementary Total			772	129%	-236	536	89%
Wolftever Creek		0	82		38	120	
Elementary Capacity =	700	1	82		34	116	
Capacity =	700	2	58		37	95	
		3	73		39	112	
		4	73		33	106	
		5	81		28	100	
Wolftever Creek			- 01		20	103	
Elementary Total			449	64%	209	658	94%
Grand Total			5141		0	5141	



Why Rezone Elementary Schools Now?

- 1) There is no immediate need for elementary rezoning since it won't be effective until the completion of the new East Brained Elementary in August 2014, over 2 years from now.
- 2) The County's "families need time" argument is discredited by the announcement of Ooltewah Elementary based rezoning a full 12 months prior relative to East Brainerd Elementary rezoning.
- 3) Current proposal shifts 220 children to Wolftever, a relatively weak academic school, from two of the best schools, academically, in the County. This is an enrollment increase of 47%.
- 4) A deferral would allow the County to demonstrate that the "plan" (referenced numerous times by numerous people) to improve Wolftever academically was in place and succeeding versus merely existing in someone's head. Assuming a plan is adopted and progress was shown, this would address what appears to be the single largest parental concern/objection regarding moving these children to Wolftever.
- 5) Current proposal brings Wolftever enrollment to 98% of capacity (using County figures) despite being singled out as "growth" school based on County's public presentations.
- 6) Current proposal will require an expense of \$4.5MM/\$4.8MM for Wolftever expansion to house the increased enrollment from the rezoning of current Apison and Westview children. We are told this has not been approved but it currently sits at #4 on the County's facilities plan, ahead of every other construction project except new elementary schools for East Brainerd and Ooltewah and the Snow Hill addition/renovation.
- 7) Current proposal ignores existing capacity at Westview (portables) and Apison that can continue to be utilized at \$0 incremental cost to the County. This contradicts the County argument that we have to utilize capacity at Hunter/Ooltewah rather than spend for capacity at currently overcrowded schools elsewhere.
- 8) Current proposal ignores pre-K children, private school and home-school children and deferral would allow that data to be acquired and used to formulate a better plan. Better data is available through the Hamilton County Health Department and from other resources but it is not being used in the current proposal.



- 9) Current proposal uses 2000 census data, not 2010, which would be much more current and accurate.
- 10) Superintendent acknowledges that population growth will occur, but expects it somewhere between where Ooltewah/Ringgold Road crosses into Georgia and where Ooltewah/Georgetown Road crosses Mahan Gap. This encompasses at least 4 different current and proposed elementary zones. The current proposal does not consider zone-specific growth figures that we believe could be better estimated given a reasonable amount of time and effort.
- 11) Current proposal gives rise to numerous other community driven questions/concerns that could be addressed with time and community involvement such as:
 - why certain neighborhoods/homes are treated differently from others,
 - why proximity is deemed important in some cases but not in others,
 - why certain boundaries/roads are adhered to in some cases but not others,
 - why prior zoning boundaries are protected in some cases and not in others,
 - why students are being moved from overachieving schools to underperforming schools,
 - why the Administration justifies moving EHS students to OHS to relieve overcrowding without incremental expense but ignores existing capacity at elementary schools and plans on spending almost \$5MM to increase capacity at others
- 12) Current proposal was drafted over months/years by professionals trained and dedicated to completing this project. These questions/concerns are being raised by parents with day jobs and no formal training in these matters in a few days. This should cast doubt on the proposal as a whole and demand a more thorough and complete review and analysis, especially given its projected effective date of August 2014.

Given the numerous and significant objections and questions raised in such a short time frame, the likelihood that additional time, scrutiny and effort will result in a better plan and considering that the elementary rezoning won't happen for over two years, it is premature to adopt this part of the elementary rezoning proposal now. The Superintendent's objections to this deferral appear to be for his convenience, are entirely subjective, are contradicted by other positions taken and are not based in fact or reality.



Middle/High Proposal – Concerns

- The proposed HCDE rezoning forces families to choose between splitting up siblings or forcing older children to change schools
- The proposed rezoning drastically increases the distance to school for most of the affected students
- The proposed rezoning does not recognize the fact that Ooltewah High School is at capacity with 1400 students
- Ooltewah schools are growing faster than East Hamilton
 - Ooltewah Middle School growth rate is approximately 12% while East Hamilton Middle School growth rate is 5% over the same period
 - Ooltewah High School growth rate is approximately 6% while East Hamilton High School growth rate is 5% since all grades started attending
- The Superintendent stated that rezoning will occur again in four to five years. The currently proposed grandfathering (6-12) will not reduce the overcrowding at EHMHS for five years. At that point, assuming zero growth, Ooltewah High School will be overcrowded, EHMHS will be at capacity, and we will have to rezone again.
- ➤ The High School at East Hamilton has just reached capacity. The Middle School enrollment has been driving the overcrowding situation. The original zoning lines drawn in 2007 appear to be ideal if a middle school is built. Why change the lines from what could be considered ideal from a high school perspective, only to overcrowd Ooltewah and not resolve the issue of the needed middle school?
- ➤ Portables will eliminate the need to change current High School zoning lines that are ideal. Portables will provide capacity for 500 to 600 students and are the standard method for providing quick capacity in a high growth situation. This will allow the postponement of the needed middle school until a time when finances are in place for that build.
- Lines for the proposed HCDE rezoning plan use proximity, natural boundaries and other justifications for line changes when they suit their desired changes. Each validating factor is utilized only when it suits the end result. The justifications are not static throughout the proposed zone changes. They are only used when they support a decision and dismissed when they contradict a decision.



Ooltewah's Capacity Issue

Ooltewah High School's student capacity is of concern to the committee and is a significant source of contention when looking at the HCDE rezoning proposal. HCDE has repeatedly stated that OHS has a capacity of 1800 students. It can be seen in their proposal presentation to the public and page three of the online posting of that presentation. The number has been used as a justification for planning to accommodate 1704 students after their rezoning proposal is implemented but the 1800 capacity is unsubstantiated.

The capacity of Ooltewah High School is approximately 1400 students. This number can be referenced from numerous sources, two of which are:

- Page 26 of the 2004 RPA report titled "The impact of proposed new subdivision developments on school facilities"
- A 2/25/12 WRCBtv.com report titled "Rezoning Meetings set for East Hamilton Schools," by David Carroll – plus numerous other news stories about the OHS overcrowding issue before 2009

The disparity of the capacity numbers from the HCDE rezoning proposal and the other sources is of great concern due to the relatively recent overcrowding seen at OHS. As recently as the 2008-2009 school year, there were 1913 students enrolled at OHS. There were also 25 teachers without classrooms, with classes meeting in the commons and the gyms. This situation is related in the 2008-2009 OHS school improvement plan.

The 2008-2009 school improvement plan states that there were 65 classrooms at OHS. Subsequent OHS school improvement plans also state the number of classrooms being 65 and there is no documented construction to increase this number since that time.

Currently there are no empty classrooms at OHS and there are 1387 students enrolled. This supports the stated capacity of approximately 1400 students. Another support for the 1400 student capacity is found by looking at the overcrowding in 2008-2009.

Minimum number of teachers:

65(filled class rooms) + 25 (teachers without class rooms) = 90 teachers

1913/90 = 21.26 (students/teacher)

Attributing 1 teacher to 1 class room:

21.26(students/classroom) x 65(classrooms) = 1382 students

Based on these calculations, the number of students per classroom is far below the legal limit and is in line with practical limitations to how many students can be enrolled in a class. Those limitations can relate to special education programs, subject matter, teacher/educator level, and the desires/schedules of the students, etc. Additionally, the curriculum offered by the school, when broad, can actually lead to the need for a greater number of smaller classes. That is why the maximum number of students allowed by law will rarely be the norm and the actual capacity of a school should never be based on that limit. The OHS 1800 student capacity number used by the HCDE proposal is very close to the maximum allowed by law and the 1704 students expected would likely result in as many as 14 teachers without class rooms. That would be an unacceptable situation to teachers, parents and students alike.



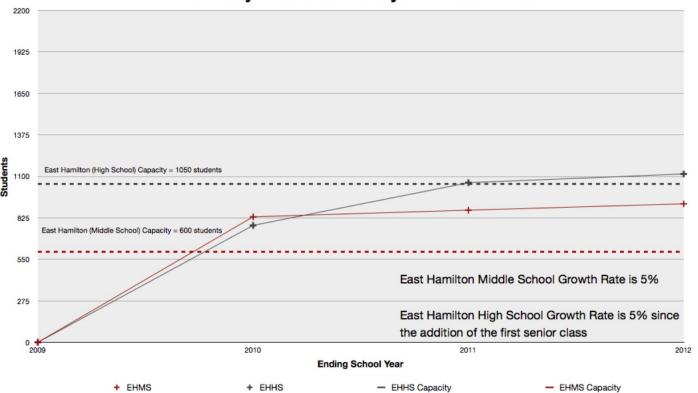
Middle High Capacity Analysis

Data Provided by HCDE - Reframed by Parent Committee

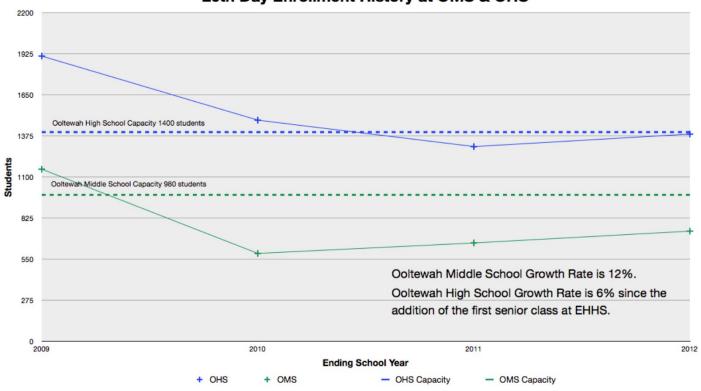
	Capacity		2011-2012 Current Enrollment	% Cap	Zoning Changes	Projected Enrollment	% Cap (Projected)
Name		grade	Total		Total	Total	
East Hamilton Middle		6	304		-98	206	
Capacity =	600	7	297		-84	213	
		8	310		-77	233	
EHMS Total			911	152%	-259	652	109%
East Hamilton High		9	296		-79	217	
Capacity =	1050	10	299		-92	207	
		11	304		-99	205	
		12	207		-63	144	
EHHS Total			1106	105%	-333	773	74%
EHMHS Total			2017	122%	-851	1425	86%
Hunter Middle		6	199		37	236	
Capacity =	930	7	224		31	255	
		8	220		33	253	
Hunter Middle Total			643	69%	101	744	80%
Ooltewah High		9	362		79	441	
Capacity =	1400	10	338		92	430	
		11	337		99	436	
		12	334		63	397	
Ooltewah High Total			1371	98%	333	1704	122%
Ooltewah Middle		6	276		61	337	
Capacity =	980	7	253		53	306	
		8	246		44	290	
Ooltewah Middle Total			775	79%	158	933	95%
Grand Total			4806		0	4806	



20th Day Enrollment History at EHMS & EHHS



20th Day Enrollment History at OMS & OHS





Our Proposal

- 1) Maintain EHMHS zone as defined in 2007
- 2) Install portable classrooms at EHMHS to accommodate current enrollment level
- 3) Postpone rezoning of Westview, Apison, East Brainerd, Bess T. Shepherd and Wolftever elementary schools for one year
- 4) Gain broad community involvement for the purpose of rezoning the above elementary schools
- 5) Have the RPA develop current projections for growth in the East Brainerd, Ooltewah and Apison areas
- 6) Utilize those RPA projections combined with the community involvement to address elementary rezoning and prioritization of a new middle school for the East Hamilton Area

Supporting arguments:

- 1) Maintain EHMHS zone as defined in 2007
 - a) This is the least disruptive option to the community as a whole
 - b) This zone effectively decreased OHS overcrowding in the '09-10 school year from over 1900 to 1480 students
 - c) The only reason cited for changing the zone is overcrowding and there are other methods for addressing overcrowding as listed in this proposal
 - d) Ooltewah High School will be adversely impacted by the increase in students
 - i) OHS is being targeted for an enrollment of 1709 students when its capacity is actually around 1400 students
 - ii) Reports of OHS having an increased capacity of 1800 (up from 1400) have not been justified by construction since '08-'09 (when there were over 1900 students enrolled with 25 floating teachers and classes meeting in the commons and gyms)
- 2) Install portable classrooms at EHMHS to accommodate current enrollment level
 - a) The addition of portable classrooms will immediately increase the capacity at EH
 - b) The increased capacity will allow for growth at EH and at OHS
 - c) The increased capacity will provide relief until a new middle school is built in the area
 - d) The projected cost is less than a million dollars for ten portables which will accommodate approximately 500 to 600 students
 - e) Portable classrooms are the standard method of providing quick capacity in a high growth situation



- 3) Postpone rezoning of Westview, Apison, East Brainerd, Bess T. Shepherd, and Wolftever elementary schools for one year
 - a) There is no immediate need for rezoning the listed elementary schools because changes are not scheduled to be implemented until the '14-'15 school year
 - b) There are numerous parental concerns (as listed in the "Why Rezone East Hamilton Schools Now?" document)
 - c) Time to address these concerns is needed
- 4) Gain broad community involvement for the purpose of rezoning the above elementary schools
 - a) Finding the best solution to the rezoning will require input from all affected neighborhoods
 - b) There are portions of the current elementary rezoning proposal that are recognized as needing reconsideration/discussion and those areas are not directly represented by the current committee
- 5) Have the RPA develop current projections for growth in the East Brainerd, Ooltewah, and Apison areas
 - a) No RPA area growth analysis data for the area has been provided to the committee
 - b) The RPA studies posted online that relate to the area in question are several years old
- 6) Utilize those RPA projections combined with the community involvement to address elementary rezoning and prioritization of a new middle school for the East Hamilton Area
 - a) The best solution will only be found by partnering with the community while planning for local and regional growth
 - b) A lack of community input is one of the major factors for the current situation



Alternative Elementary Rezoning Examples

	Proposed East Hamilto/Ooltewah Rezoning Current Proposal					Proposed East Hamilto/Ooltewah Rezoning Scenario 1					Proposed East Hamilto/Ooltewah Rezoning Scenario 2				
Current Enrollment	Westview 772	Apison 651	East Braine	Wolftever	Total 2,617	Westvier 772	Apison 651	East Braine V	Wolftever 468	Total 2,617	Westviev 772	Apisor 651	East Braine V	Volfteve 468	Total 2,617
Capacity Capacity w/Existing Portables Target	600 772 536	600 651 500	1,100 1,100 940	700 700 668	3,000 3,223 2,644	600 772 536	600 651 500	1,100 1,100 940	700 700 668	3,000 3,223 2,644	600 772 536	600 651 500	1,100 1,100 940	700 700 668	3,000 3,223 2,644
TO WES (from Holly Hills) TO EBE (from Belleau Woods) From Apison (from Windstone) From Apison (to WES) From Shepherd (to EBE) Standifer Gap North East of ORR	772 (83) (178) 14	(14) (137)	726 178	468 83 137	2,617 - - - - -	772 (178) 14	651 (14) (100)	726 178	468	2,617 - - - - - -	772 (178) 14	(14) (137)	726 178	468 137	2,617 - - - - - -
Shepherd to EBE			34					34					34		
Revised Enrollment	525	500	938	688	2,617	608	537	938	568	2,617	608	500	938	605	2,617
Enrollment to Target	98%	100%	100%	103%	99%	113%	107%	100%	85%	99%	113%	100%	100%	91%	99%
Enrollment to Capacity	88%	83%	85%	98%	87%	101%	90%	85%	81%	87%	101%	83%	85%	86%	87%
Enrollment to Capacity w/ existing portab	68%	77%	85%	98%	81%	79%	82%	85%	81%	81%	79%	77%	85%	86%	81%