

Estimated cost of Island transportation center rises

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Published: August 28, 2012, 8:40 AM

Updated: August 28, 2012, 8:42 AM

The cost of a new Grand Island School District Transportation Center has risen above the preliminary \$5 million estimate, but it is still affordable project because of state aid and a reserve fund. school district officials said Monday.

Two people connected to the district's capital project - William K. Zografos, vice president of CannonDesign, architects; and Thomas R. Caruso, vice president of Campus Construction, project manager - told the Board of Education this week that the higher cost is primarily because of 4,000 square feet added to the project.

After studying five possible sites, the board informally agreed to keep the transportation center - which serves the district's buses - at its current site behind Sidway Elementary School on Baseline Road.

Wendel Duchscherer Engineers & Architects offered three options for use of the site, which are under board consideration with a decision expected at the Sept. 10 meeting. Campus Construction presented the board Monday with revised cost estimates on those options.

The district has about \$850,000 in a reserve fund for the project, which is subject to a public referendum, expected to be held in mid- to late November or early December. The project is separate from the \$51.4 million capital project approved by voters in December 2011.

Joseph Giarrizzo, district finance director, noted the fiscal impact of each option on the district varies based on state aid eligibility. For example, renovation work related to health and safety is not eligible for state aid reimbursement.

The three options - dubbed red, white and blue - and new cost estimates are:

* Red: Demolish the existing 65-year-old building and build a new 16,000-square-foot structure for bus maintenance and operations, \$6.7 million.

* White: Erect the new building and relocate Buildings and Grounds from the former Nike Base to the existing building, which would undergo some interior and exterior renovations \$6.7 million.

Under this scenario, the district-operated Eco Island Nature Center, also on the old Nike Base on Staley Road, would be relocated into the nearby Buildings and Grounds space. That space also needs some renovations, but that would be less expensive than needed repairs and improvements to nature center's current building, said Giarrizzo.

* Blue: Build a new 12,000-square-foot building while using 7,600 square feet of the old building for Buildings and Grounds maintenance; 3,000 square feet for transportation operations including offices, break rooms, restrooms and a kitchenette, and 1,400 for storage, \$7.4 million.

There are several elements common to all three concepts including a new ring road for buses and additional parking.