

Schools' Construction Plan Asks For \$2.2 Million A Year

BY TERRY POPE

To help relieve overcrowding and to restock the schools' transportation supply, the Brunswick County Board of Education Monday unanimously approved a four-year capital outlay budget that will request \$2.2 million a year from county commissioners.

The plan presented by School Superintendent Gene Yarbrough calls for the construction of new classrooms at Lincoln Primary, Union Primary and South Brunswick High Schools beginning in intervals over the next four years. Yarbrough said a long-range plan was devised after consulting with County Manager Billy Carter.

The \$2.2 million request for the 1985-86 fiscal year will be added to the \$4.4 million request in current expense funds the board approved last week. The schools' total local allocation request for next year from coun-

ty commissioners is \$6.6 million.

In the last year of the four-year proposal, the 1988-89 fiscal year, the schools will seek \$3.2 million for the construction of an additional school that will relieve overcrowding and longer bus routes, Yarbrough said. A \$1.4 million construction reserve will be applied toward the project to reduce the requested amount from the commissioners to \$2.2 million.

"We feel that this proposed capital outlay budget will meet our facility needs and help put our rolling stock back into condition so we won't have to run on bare thread," Yarbrough said. "I don't think it's a radical plan at all."

A study conducted by the state Division of School Planning last fall shows the Brunswick County schools have almost 1,000 pupils more than their capacity, he noted. A three-man team from the department toured the

schools last October and advised the school system it may need another elementary school in the Supply area within five years that will house 700 students, Yarbrough said.

Next year's allocation would allow the start of a \$1.4 million construction at Lincoln Primary School while in the second year a \$1.3 million renovation project would begin at Union Primary. In the third year of the plan, an \$820,000 construction would begin at South Brunswick High.

Next year's capital outlay request also includes \$20,000 for a dishwashing room at Southport Primary, \$20,000 for the replacement of waste water treatment systems, \$10,000 for water system hook-on fees and \$5,000 for high school stadium bleachers. Another \$126,000 for the replacement of three activity buses and three maintenance pick-up trucks will be requested.

"This is one of the best budgets I've ever seen," said school board member James Clemmons. "I don't believe there is anything hidden in it. It's clear and cut."

Board Chairman James Forstner said that adding a new elementary school by the year 1989 was "not just our idea, but the state's idea. It just makes sense to plan for it ahead of time."

In the second year, the schools will seek to replace two activity buses, three pick-up trucks, one activity van, two yellow school buses and a diesel truck and tanker. All replaced school buses will have diesel engines, Yarbrough said, so a \$30,000 diesel tanker will be necessary.

Water and sewer systems at all schools will be replaced under the plan as well as furnishings and equipment for the schools and administration. In the first \$2.2 million budget, \$241,660 is requested for computer

hardware and leasing, library equipment, dish washers, vocational education business classroom equipment and instructional equipment.

According to the current enrollment, nine of the county's 11 schools are presently over capacity, Yarbrough reported. Only Lincoln Primary and Waccamaw Elementary are slightly under capacity.

Shallotte Middle has 1,069 students enrolled at the facility which has a capacity of 924 students. Union Primary houses 725 students while its capacity is 616.

South Brunswick High School is the most overfilled school with 855 students, or 215 students over capacity. West Brunswick High has 925 students, or 23 over capacity while North Brunswick High has 688 students, or 48 over capacity.

Other schools are Bolivia Elementary, 498 students, 48 over capacity; Leland Middle, 937 students, 13 over

capacity; South Brunswick Middle, 695 students, 101 over capacity; Southport Primary, 763 students, 125 over capacity; Waccamaw Elementary, 415 students, or 25 below capacity and Lincoln Primary, 654 students, 22 below capacity.

Board members voted Monday night to approve requests from nine schools to exceed maximum class sizes as established by the state.

Affected are 11 classes at Bolivia Elementary; nine at Leland Middle; ten at Lincoln Primary; eight at Shallotte Middle; six at South Brunswick Middle; 18 at Southport Elementary; 15 at Union Primary; two at Waccamaw Elementary and six at South Brunswick High. No classroom is exceeding its limit by more than five students, except for one science class at South Brunswick High that has 12 excessive students.

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DOUG SIMMONS of Calabash comes to the aid of a shivering first-grader, Phillip Johnson. He was one of 17 youngsters injured Monday morning when a Union

Primary School bus collided with a truck in downtown Shallotte.

School Bus Accident Sends Union Students To Hospital

BY TERRY POPE AND SUSAN USHER

Two school bus accidents sent more than 40 Brunswick County students to the hospital Monday morning, but no serious injuries were reported.

In the worst accident, 17 Union Primary School students were treated at the Brunswick Hospital in Supply after receiving cuts and bruises when their bus collided with a pick-up truck at the intersection of U.S. 17 and N.C. 130 south in Shallotte. The bus was enroute to the school south of Shallotte when the 7:50 a.m. accident occurred.

Students were sprayed with flying glass and received cuts and bruises after being thrown on impact. The worst injury, a fractured arm, was sustained by second-grader Lesley Holden, 7.

All 42 students on the bus were transported to the hospital where they were checked by physicians before their parents picked them up. Only one boy was kept overnight for observation after complaining of a headache, said hospital public relations director Betsy Lewis.

The driver of the school bus, Johnnie Christopher (Chris) Hargis, 16, of Route 1, Supply, was charged with running a red light and operating a vehicle without a valid school bus license by Shallotte Patrol Officer Nellie Evans.

The regular bus driver for the N.C. 130 (Holden Beach area) route, Randy Lee Hair, 19, of Route 1, Supply, was charged with allowing an unauthorized person to operate a motor vehicle under his control. Hair was on the bus Monday morning at the time of accident. His bus driver's license was automatically revoked.

According to Officer Evans, Hargis had completed bus driver training. However, to obtain bus driver certification, the applicant must have had a driver's license for six months. Hargis' six-month waiting period ended Monday, but he had not received

his certificate before taking the wheel of the bus.

It was the second bus accident of the morning resulting in damages and minor injuries, said School Transportation Supervisor Bill Turner. Several students were taken to the hospital by their parents for examination after a Leland Middle School bus ran off the road and struck a tree on State Road 1428, known as the Summerhill Road, near Leland.

Turner said the driver was swatting at a spider when the bus steered off the road and came to rest on its side in a ditch. The driver had just started the route and only a few students were on the bus at the time.

Officer Evans said the Shallotte accident occurred when the international 1972 southbound bus ran a red light at the intersection of U.S. 17 and N.C. 130 west in Shallotte. The bus struck a truck crossing the intersection from N.C. 130 to Blake Street.

Its front crumpled, the truck was declared a total loss. The right front fender and doorwell of the bus were damaged, Evans said. The impact knocked the windshield out of the passenger side of the bus and created a mosaic of broken glass in the driver's side.

Jason Lee Smith, 49, of Route 6, Whiteville, was driving the truck at a speed of 30 mph to 35 mph, Evans estimated, while the bus was traveling at an estimated 25 mph.

Smith and a passenger in the truck, Leonard Rackley, 36, also of Whiteville, were taken to the Brunswick Hospital also, where Smith was treated for a fractured rib.

Union Primary P.E. instructor Tom Simmons was trailing the bus and was one of the first to arrive at the scene.

"I think the kids did a super job," Simmons said. "Once they saw a familiar face, they calmed right down."

Students were transported by Shallotte and Waccamaw Volunteer Rescue Squads and patrol cars driven by Officer Evans, Brunswick County Sheriff's Deputy Jerry Bryant and Chief Deputy John Marlow.

Sheriff's Department Sgt. Larry Joyner and Shallotte Police Sgt. Rodney Gause assumed patrol coverage in Shallotte, clearing Evans to help transport the students.

"The emergency room people at the hospital did a super job," Simmons said. "I think they were only expecting the five kids we had in the patrol car. When we got there with 19 they were shocked. When the rest of the students came in by bus, they just flew into action."

After receiving treatment in the emergency room, students were taken to the hospital cafeteria where manager Randy Keese supplied chocolate ice cream and milkshakes for those recovering from stitches or other forms of treatment. Some of the students also talked about the accident.

"We were just riding along," said Melissa Robinson, 9, "and the next thing I knew we crashed. I'm just go-

ing to be sore for a few days."

"The next thing I knew I got a tooth knocked out," added Lenon Norris, 6.

According to Ms. Lewis, hospital public relations director, nurses from other areas of the hospital were called in to help in the emergency room during the influx of students Monday. Off duty volunteer rescue squad members also helped in the emergency room. The hospital did not have to call in additional physicians, she said.

According to Union Assistant Principal Diana Mintz, the list of injured students treated at the hospital included Crystal Crabtree, 8; Lawrence Jackson, 7; Heath Calson, 8; Kelly Stepp, 8; Andrea Fulford, 9; Tanya Powers, 8; Heath Inman, 9; Nicholas Locklear, 6; Walter Solano, 6; Patrick Locklear, 6; Misty Skipper, 8; Shana Lynn Staley; Sarah Robinson; Phillip Johnson; Lesley Holden; Lenon Norris and Melissa Robinson.

Most of the students were back in school Monday, Ms. Mintz said.

Four witnesses to the accident agree that the bus ran the light, Officer Evans noted.

She said road markings indicate that truck driver applied brakes shortly before entering the intersection, with the vehicle skidding about 38 feet after impact.

The bus driver apparently did not apply brakes until after the collision, Evans said. Hargis was thrown out of the driver's seat, then quickly "sat

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SENTENCING DATE SET

Tugboat Owner, State Agree On Payment

BY SUSAN USHER

A May 17 sentencing date has been set for a tugboat operator found guilty of negligence after his boat damaged two Brunswick County bridges in January.

Meanwhile, the N.C. Department of Transportation and the company that owns the tugboat, Sea Tow Inc., of Virginia Beach, Va., have agreed on a ceiling for recovery of damages by the state.

"The owner has said he would pay up to \$225,000," said DOT spokesman Bill Jones.

Federal Administrative Law Judge Peter A. Fitzpatrick ruled that James R. Kelly Jr. of Virginia Beach, Va., was guilty of two of three charges levied by the U.S. Coast Guard, said Lt. James Carter of the District Marine Safety Office.

Punishment for Kelly could range from an official admonishment to revocation of his license. But Carter said he expects the U.S. Coast Guard to argue for a sentence between those two extremes, such as a suspension of the license and/or probation.

Fitzpatrick ruled the Coast Guard proved that Kelly was negligently operating the tugboat "Angela M." on Jan. 12 when it pushed a 210-foot barge into the Sunset Beach Bridge, destroying the fender system, three 17-foot sections of the bridge and damaging a fourth, cutting off vehicular traffic to the island for 4½ days.

He also was found to be operating negligently when, earlier on the same day, the tug and barge struck the fender system of the Ocean Isle

Beach Bridge, damaging the fender and breaking two timbers.

Fitzpatrick did not find that Kelly was negligent when his boat ran aground just north of the Ocean Isle Beach Bridge, said Carter.

The May 17 sentencing hearing is tentatively scheduled at 9:30 a.m. in Wilmington, but Carter said he expects the hearing to be moved to Norfolk, Va.

The N.C. Department of Transportation had delayed beginning action to recover damages in the incident pending the outcome of the Coast Guard investigation.

Jones said DOT is putting together final bills for repairs and other expenses associated with the incident.

The bills will be sent to the department controller, who will send an in-

voice to the owner for payment.

Jones said the state hopes its costs don't exceed the sum Sea Tow is willing to pay.

"If they cannot pay or do not pay, we will have to pay any difference," he said.

Two months ago, the federal government granted \$160,000 in emergency funding for repair of the Sunset Beach Bridge.

In a hearing in March, Kelly testified that his boat scraped the Ocean Isle Bridge but did not hit it and that gusts of wind had caused the boat to crash into the Sunset Beach Bridge.

Witnesses for the Coast Guard testified that the tugboat and barge had followed a weaving course down the waterway.

Beer-Wine Vote Set For Tuesday

Shallotte voters will decide Tuesday whether to allow diners to have a glass of wine or beer with a restaurant meal and/or to let shoppers take home dinner wines as well as beer from area stores.

The polls at the Shallotte Volunteer Fire Department open at 6:30 a.m. and voting will continue until 7:30 p.m., according to the Brunswick County Board of Elections, which just this year took over the job of conducting the town's elections.

When registration books closed on April 15, 334 voters were listed. A final check of the books will be made this week.

Specifically voters will decide whether to allow any or all of these options: 1) sale of beer and other malt beverages for consumption on-premises at Class A restaurants, hotels and motels; 2) sale of unfortified (dinner) wines for on-premises consumption in eating places; and 3) sale of unfortified wines by licensed retail stores for off-premises consumption.

Fortified wines and beer already are available for off-premises consumption.