

# **State Aid for School Construction**

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**Jill Briggs Campbell, Deputy Secretary and Chief of  
Operations**

**Vermont Agency of Education**

# Aligning School Construction Investment with Readiness

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- **Where Vermont Is Now**

- Act 72 → Statewide facilities assessment completed
- Act 73 → Program framework established
- **!** Average school age: 60+ years
- **!** Significant deferred maintenance + equity gaps

# AOE Recommended Implementation Path

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- **Year 1 (2026)**

## **Build Capacity**

- Stand up School Construction Division
- **Hire key staff**
- Create planning tools + guidance
- Fund facilities master planning grants
- Develop rules & prioritization criteria (2026-2027)

- **Year 2 (2027)**

## **Launch Program**

- Open applications
- Provide district technical assistance
- Begin project review and approvals

- **Year 2–3 (2027-2028)**

## **Fund + Oversee**

- Release construction aid
- Monitor projects statewide
- Report to Legislature

# H.955 Implementation Path

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- **Year 1 (2026)**

- July 1 → System changes take effect (CESAs, etc.)
- Oct 1 → Facilitators hired for CESAs/district mergers
- Dec → Rulemaking expectations (DQS, program structure)

- **Year 2 (2027)**

- Ongoing rulemaking + program development (March 2027)
- Capacity building → **when AOE construction positions would be created**

- **Year 3 (2028)**

- State decisions on district structure
- Construction Program expected to align with new system
- Potential funding + implementation pressure

# School Construction Advisory Board – Required Deliverable (Dec. 1, 2026)

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- The bill requires the Board to produce a report that:
- Identifies school construction and renovation opportunities aligned with **new governance structures**
- Conducts a **full siting study for each project**, including:
  - Cost
  - Location
  - Additional relevant factors
- Analyzes:
  - **Compatibility across projects statewide**
  - **Scenarios for consolidation**
- Evaluates:
  - Appropriate **school scale**
  - **Travel times**
  - Creation of **regional comprehensive high schools**

# Implementation Risk

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- Board members serve **part-time** and meet in **limited intervals**. They all have other roles and variable resources and expertise.
- Scope requires:
  - Statewide fieldwork
  - Data collection
  - Transportation + enrollment modeling
  - Facilities + cost analysis
- This level of work typically requires:
  - Multiple consultant teams
  - Significant project management infrastructure

**Key Takeaway:** The scope of work assigned to the Board is equivalent to a **multi-year statewide planning study**, not a part-time advisory function.

# H.955 Current Risk

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- Accelerates funding timeline, absent key system-level decisions (governance) or state capacity to run program
- Assumes implementation capacity exists
- Compresses rulemaking + setup phase

## Key Takeaway

The bill compresses rulemaking, staffing, and program implementation into the same window—without clearly sequencing capacity before funding or program launch.

# Recommendation

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- Align funding with readiness
- Ensure capacity is built **before** investment
- Protect state dollars through strong oversight
  
- Add language to Section 65 that conditions or sequences funding based on program readiness OR amend the language and timelines to reflect state-level capacity and resources and system-level governance decisions.

**Questions?**