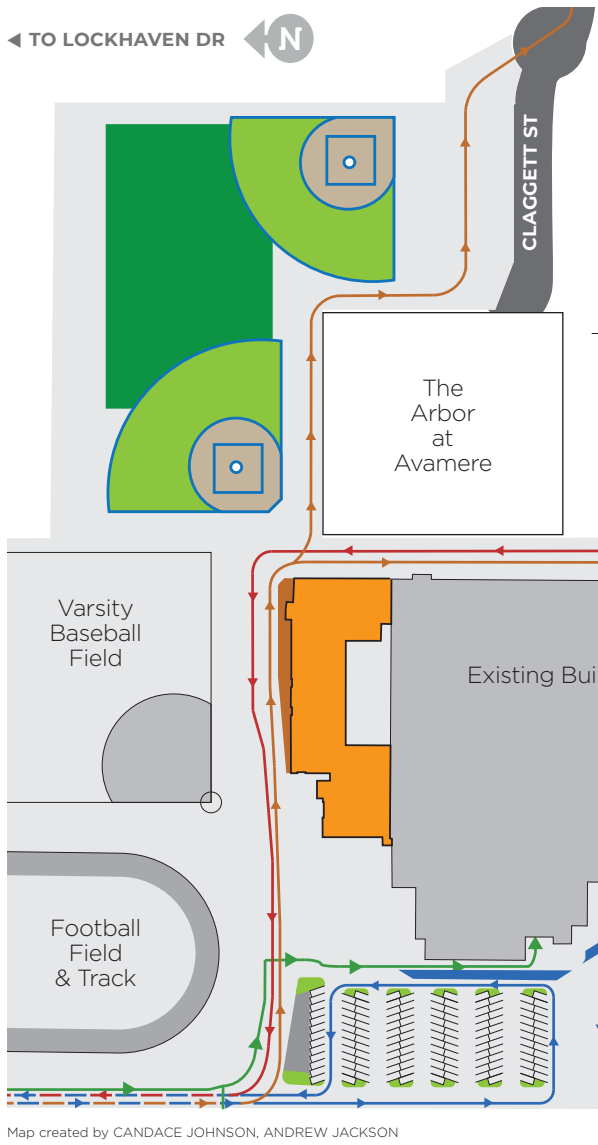


New traffic flow may reduce impact on MHS neighbors



Map created by CANDACE JOHNSON, ANDREW JACKSON

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

Ask any parent whose ever dropped off, or picked up, their student at McNary High School at the beginning and end of the day and they will likely tell you that it's a dreaded experience.

Depending on the day, it can take up to 20 minutes to enter campus, drop off a student and then get back out of the parking lot to move on with the rest of the day. The situation, at various times, has led families to seek creative alternatives for getting kids

to school, usually by making use of pedestrian gates leading to McNary. The situation is sometimes a scourge to residents who live in the adjoining neighborhoods, and one most recently felt by the residents of Newberg Drive on the west side of campus.

through the south side of the campus onto Chemawa Road North.

"It will speed up everything. It's not always just the amount of cars, it's the stop, start, stop, start," Jespersen said.

Vehicles entering from the north and south sides of the campus will have dedicated routes to follow into and out of the parking lot to minimize the merging that chokes the current patterns over and over again at different points.

Residents have voiced their concerns and frustrations to the school, the school district and the Keizer City Council over the past five years. Relief may be in sight, but it could well get worse before it gets better.

The planned expansion of McNary High School includes a near-complete redesign of the school's parking lot and traffic flow patterns.

"There will be more parking, but the flow will be so much better," said Erik Jespersen, McNary principal. "Traffic engineers have helped us think through that flow and now there will be two main spots to drop off kids."

Bus drop off and SPED bus drop off will be handled through the north side of campus on Lockhaven Drive North, peel off from car traffic to travel around the back of the building to drop off at a new entrance that will open in the fall of 2021 and then exit

Special education buses will enter from the east end of the campus through a new driveway leading past St. Edward Catholic Church and The Arbor at Avamere Court.

All the transformation will likely mean some headaches in the interim because on-campus parking will be drastically reduced during the 14-month construction project, but the district is looking for opportunities to partner with other spaces in the area.

"We're working through a lot of it right now. We might look for community partners to assist with parking and find some viable solutions," said Karma Krause, the district's bond information officer.

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the current weight room.

While the current weight room is being demolished in favor of a bigger, more open space, athletic programs' access to the current facility, and when the new one will be completed, is still unclear.

The fall sports programs (i.e. football, volleyball, boys soccer, girls soccer, cross country) would be affected the most if the weight room is unavailable this summer.

"We don't know if we're going to be without a weight room for a month or a week or all summer. Those are the things that we're still working on," Gragg said.

By the time Phase 2 comes around in September, there will be portable classrooms all over the grass field by Chemawa Road, which will have its greatest impact on the boys and girls soccer programs — both programs hold practices and play their non-varsity games in that area.

"If any sport is being impacted the most, I would say that soccer probably is," Gragg said. "While they'll still play the majority of varsity games at the (football) stadium like they always have, a full-sized grass practice field on McNary's campus will be difficult to find."

Gragg is expecting that McNary won't have a grass field for the 2019 and 2020 seasons, which means that both boys and girls soccer programs will have to find different places to practice and play games for

their non-varsity teams.

"We need a plan for soccer, we just don't know what that is yet," Gragg said.

McNary boys soccer coach Miguel Camarena acknowledged that Whiteaker Middle School might be a destination for his program next season, but he knows that it's not going to be easy.

"It is going to be a challenge no doubt about it, but we are going to make this work," Camarena said. "The biggest challenges for us is going to be transportation, location and space for our boys soccer players."

"Another issue is to figure out where are we going to store soccer equipment for practices and games."

Despite the hassle that the next two seasons will be bring,

both Camarena and McNary girls soccer coach AJ Nash, feel like they are in good hands with McNary administration.

"We do have great leadership within our athletic department so I am confident that, although we will feel the change, the impact will be limited and our programs will not suffer because of it," Nash said.

Camarena also commented: "In the long run, the expansion will be positive."

Phase 2 will start this fall and go into Spring 2020. While there is scheduled to be a JV softball field over in the purchased St. Edward space by that time, the Celtics varsity softball team will remain in their current space for one last season — with the portable classrooms just beyond the home run fence.

The new varsity softball field is scheduled to be ready in

Spring 2021.

"We're good either way. As long as we have a place to play and can compete at a high level," McNary softball coach Kevin Wise said.

While the demolition of the existing tennis courts will take place in Phase 1 this summer, the new courts are scheduled to be ready next tennis season — which will be located near Chemawa Road.

"I am excited that we will get newly constructed tennis courts," McNary girls tennis coach Sean Smith said. "I have great support from the school and community and foresee the program getting stronger every year."

The plan is for Phase 3 to take place during summer of 2020 and be mostly completed by the time the fall rolls around. But with a project this substan-

tial, schedules could very well change.

"I always like to remind folks that schedules are expected to change," said Karma Krause, who is a capital projects public engagement specialist with the school district.

"We're not ready to make firm guarantees on anything until we have full, solid plans."

While the McNary athletic program isn't gaining much in terms of square footage, Gragg believes that these changes will be very beneficial to the school and the city of Keizer.

"There are so many benefits to having these upgrades," Gragg said. "Not only for athletics, but everything in general."

"Having the majority of our athletics in one space makes things convenient as well."

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