

# fact\$ *in a backpack*

December 2006

## WCSD keeps close eye on energy costs

Anyone who uses energy has been impacted in the past two years by increasing energy costs. The West Carrollton School District is no exception.

The district has experienced jumps in its cost for natural gas to heat buildings and in its cost for fuel for school buses. The combined cost for both types of energy has more than doubled since 2000.

District officials monitor costs, look for ways to purchase in bulk, and keep equipment well-maintained so it operates efficiently. For example, in 1999, the district signed a five-year contract with its natural gas provider.

That contract kept annual costs for natural gas below \$200,000. Once it expired, costs jumped. Such contracts are no longer offered.

After hurricane Katrina damaged oil refineries, WCSD was among the natural gas users who experienced a dramatic increase in costs.

From fiscal year 2004 to 2005, natural gas costs increased 12 percent. From fiscal year 2005 to 2006, the increase was 30 percent.

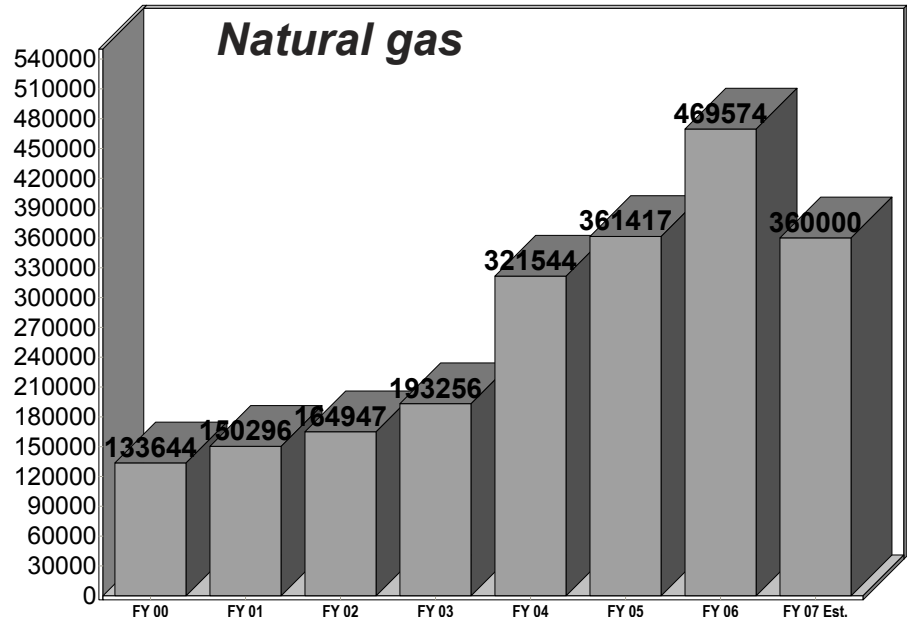
District treasurer Ryan Slone attributes the startling increase directly to hurricane Katrina, which damaged a number of refineries in the Gulf Coast region.

Increases in electric costs have been less dramatic but do continue. One factor is the increased use of technology in the buildings. More items using electricity are in place.

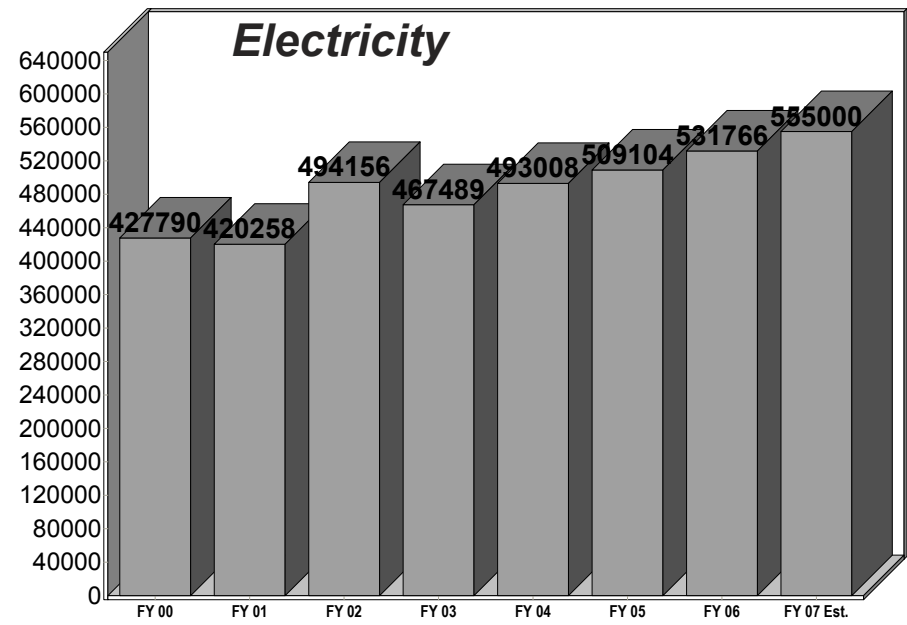
However, the district has -- and continues to -- replaced aging lighting and other electric fixtures so energy use is contained.

Natural gas and electricity, however, continue to be among the areas where WCSD has little control of costs.

### Energy costs in West Carrollton Schools



The cost of natural gas was held down while the district had a contract with its fuel provider. When the contract expired, renewal was not offered. Costs jumped as a result of that and industry-wide cost increases. Hurricane Katrina also resulted in a dramatic increase in FY 2006. Electric costs are affected by similar trends, but have not seen major shifts in recent years.



Source: WCSD Treasurer's Office

# WCSD saves in conversion to diesel buses

WCSD owns 40 buses and operates 36 routes every school day. Five of those buses have gasoline engines, the rest have diesel engines.

Diesel engines are less expensive to maintain and operate overall, although diesel fuel is more expensive than unleaded gasoline. Diesel buses get 8 miles to the gallon compared to less than 2 for gasoline buses.

"Diesel buses are a lot less expensive to operate and fuel mileage is the biggest reason," Operations Supervisor Jack Haag said.

For the 2004-2005 school year, the district purchased 19,800 gallons of unleaded fuel at an average cost of \$1.68 per gallon and 56,200 gallons of diesel fuel at an average cost of \$1.75 per gallon. Total fuel cost was \$131,576.30.

That cost will be increasing, however, Haag said.

The Environmental Protection Agency is requiring a switch to ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel beginning January 1, 2007. That will add 20 cents to each gallon's cost, Haag said.

Still, the much greater fuel economy and easier to maintain engines provide a big savings to the district.

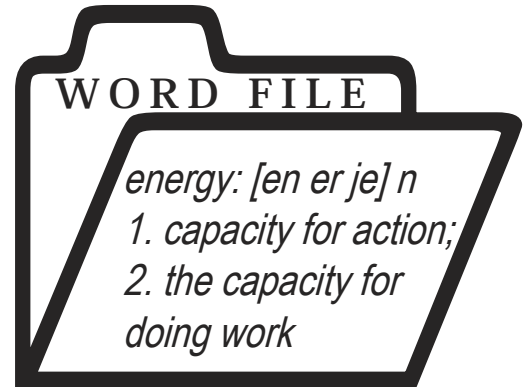
## Fast fact\$ about transportation

- WCSD transports 2,800 students every day.
- WCSD buses travel 350,000 miles every school year on their regular routes.
- In 2005-2006, buses made 961 field trips for an additional 35,000 miles.
- WCSD operates 36 bus routes.
- Maximum capacity on an elementary school route is 72 students.
- Maximum capacity on a secondary school route is 48 students.

All districts in Ohio are required to have a policy on idling or leaving a bus running while parked. However, there are no requirements regarding what the policy should say.

WCSD's policy is that no bus will be left idling in front of a school for more than five minutes. Longer idle times may be used in the bus corral, particularly during cold weather.

WCSD employs 36 bus drivers, two mechanics, a transportation coordinator and a number of aides.



## Sharing the road with school buses

Many drivers instinctively slow down or stop when they approach a school bus, but not everyone knows the laws governing bus safety. Among them:

- School buses must stop at all railroad crossings to make sure the tracks are clear.
- School buses are not allowed to back up while on school property.
- Traffic flowing with the school bus must always stop when it stops.
- Oncoming traffic must stop when the school bus stops on any road of 2, 3 or 4 lanes (neighborhood streets, Alex Bell Road).
- Bus riders are not permitted to cross more than three lanes of traffic when getting onto or off of a bus.
- Oncoming traffic does not need to stop on roads of more than four lanes (St. Rt. 741, Alex Road).



**Got a question?  
Still think the  
pieces don't fit?**

**TELL US ABOUT  
YOUR CONCERN!**

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