



House Bill 645

Transmission Line Siting - Comprehensive Plan, Recommendation, and Reporting Requirements

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Economic Matters Committee

Date: February 20, 2025

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 645 WITH AMENDMENTS.**

As drafted, this bill would create an impossible unfunded mandate for counties. MACo has worked with the sponsor on friendly amendments which address the sponsor's intent and avoid overburdening county planning offices.

The 2025 Maryland General Assembly is facing a historic number of complex generational challenges. One of the loudest issues to arise has been Maryland opposition to the Piedmont Reliability Project. The Project, which crosses Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick Counties, effectively creates an "extension cord" across some of our state's prime agricultural lands, providing Pennsylvania-generated energy to Virginia-based data centers, with little direct benefit to Marylanders. As the General Assembly debates how to address this and other energy challenges, one of the biggest underlying issues will be how to prioritize now competing state priorities (i.e., energy demands and environmental goals).

Since the 1960s, counties and the State have invested hundreds of millions of dollars into conservation, and to date, counties have actively limited development in these preserved areas. The intent of HB 645 is to respond to the Piedmont Project by limiting new transmission lines to areas where there are currently existing infrastructure and rights-of-way. MACo amendments conform HB 645 with SB 853, which accomplishes the same underlying intent without overburdening already incredibly limited county resources. As transmission infrastructure upgrades may uniquely be accomplished by upgrading existing lines or using existing land, counties join the sponsor in wanting to protect Maryland communities and the finite number of sensitive lands.

As amended, this is commonsense legislation which seeks to address conflicts between Maryland's growing demand for energy and billions invested into other pro-climate policies to date. For this reason, MACo urges the Committee to give HB 645 a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report. MACo's suggested amendments are included on the following page.

MACo Suggested Amendments for HB 645

Amendment #1

On pages 2 through 6, strike in their entirety the lines beginning with page 2, line 13, down through page 6, line 15, inclusive.

Amendment #2

On pages 6 through 8 strike in their entirety the lines beginning with page 6, line 17, down through page 8, line 21, inclusive, and substitute:

“(H) (1) SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, THE COMMISSION MAY NOT AUTHORIZE, AND A PERSON MAY NOT UNDERTAKE, THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN OVERHEAD TRANSMISSION LINE THAT DOES NOT UTILIZE AN EXISTING TRANSMISSION LINE RIGHT-OF-WAY UNLESS THE APPLICANT ADEQUATELY DEMONSTRATES TO THE COMMISSION THAT EXISTING TRANSMISSION LINE RIGHTS-OF-WAY ARE NOT SUFFICIENT FOR THE PROPOSED OVERHEAD TRANSMISSION LINE.

(2) IF THE COMMISSION DETERMINES THAT AN EXISTING TRANSMISSION LINE RIGHT-OF-WAY IS NOT SUFFICIENT FOR A PROPOSED OVERHEAD TRANSMISSION LINE, THE COMMISSION MAY AUTHORIZE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW OVERHEAD TRANSMISSION LINE WITHIN 0.25 MILES OF AN EXISTING OVERHEAD TRANSMISSION LINE.”

Amendment #3

On pages 8 through 10, strike in their entirety the lines beginning with page 8, line 22, down through page 10, line 17, inclusive.