



## WRITTEN TESTIMONY

**BILL NO.:** House Bill 657 – Public Utilities – Alternatives to Construction of New Transmission Lines

**COMMITTEE:** House Economic Matters Committee

**HEARING DATE:** February 20, 2025

**SPONSOR:** Delegates Pippy, Adams, Beauchamp, Bouchat, Buckel, Ciliberti, Grammer, Guyton, Hartman, Jacobs, Kerr, Mangione, Miller, Nawrocki, Otto, Rose, Ruth, Simpson, Stonko, Szeliga, and Tomlinson

**POSITION:** Favorable

### Testimony of Joanne Frederick, President, Stop MPRP, Inc.

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 657, which expands the requirement for the Public Service Commission (PSC) to evaluate alternatives to new transmission projects and ensures that historical, environmental, and agricultural preservation areas are prioritized. HB0657 is essential legislation to protect Maryland's communities, farms, and forests from unnecessary and damaging transmission infrastructure.

### The Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP) and Its Harmful Impact

The Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP), proposed by PSEG Renewable Transmission LLC, would construct a **67.2-mile-long, 500 kV overhead transmission line** through Baltimore, Carroll, and Frederick Counties, requiring a **1,221-acre right-of-way**. This project includes **303 H-frame steel structures, each between 85 to 195 feet tall**, cutting through farmland, conservation lands, and historically significant areas.

The environmental devastation caused by this project would be staggering:

- **51.1 acres of wetlands impacted**, including 10.1 acres of critical forested wetlands.
- **394.2 acres of forests clear-cut**, removing vital habitat for protected species such as the Indiana Bat and Northern Long-Eared Bat Environmental Impact Fa....
- **245.8 acres of conservation easements disrupted**, including 224.6 acres protected under the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF).
- **101 stream and waterbody crossings**, increasing erosion, sedimentation, and pollution in Maryland's waterways, endangering aquatic life and drinking water supplies.



- **303 access roads**, totaling over 140 acres, permanently scarring prime agricultural land and leading to further habitat fragmentation.

Beyond these environmental concerns, the MPRP would also severely harm property values, reduce agricultural productivity, and threaten the local economy by making these areas less attractive for residents, businesses, and visitors.

### **HB0657: A Critical Safeguard Against Unnecessary Transmission Projects**

House Bill 657 strengthens Maryland's oversight of transmission projects by requiring the Public Service Commission (PSC) to evaluate alternatives that would:

- **Utilize existing transmission lines** of other companies instead of constructing new ones.
- **Maximize the use of existing rights-of-way**, reducing land destruction and environmental harm.
- **Consider reconductoring existing transmission lines** to increase capacity without expanding infrastructure.
- **Require undergrounding transmission lines** where feasible to prevent landscape and environmental destruction.

The bill explicitly requires that transmission alternatives be assessed based on **economic efficiency, environmental preservation, and avoidance of overlap with agricultural and residential areas**. By strengthening PSC oversight, HB0657 ensures that future projects prioritize existing infrastructure over unnecessary new construction.

### **Existing Transmission System Can Handle Load Growth Without MPRP**

According to the **Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment & Sustainability** at Duke University<sup>1</sup>, the U.S. power system has significant available capacity to accommodate projected load growth **without new transmission expansion**. Their findings indicate:

- **76 GW of new load could be integrated into the existing grid with only 0.25% curtailment of peak demand.**
- **PJM alone (which includes Maryland) has at least 18 GW of available headroom**, meaning Maryland's reliability concerns can be met with better grid utilization rather than new lines rethinking-load-growth.

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<sup>1</sup> Rethinking Load Growth: Assessing the Potential for Integration of Large Flexible Loads in US Power Systems  
<https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/publications/rethinking-load-growth>



- **Reconductoring and grid optimization** can increase transmission capacity significantly without new infrastructure rethinking-load-growth.

This research underscores that projects like the MPRP are **not necessary for reliability**. Instead, existing transmission can be optimized through technology and better management practices to meet future electricity needs without the environmental and economic devastation of new high-voltage lines rethinking-load-growth.

## **Conclusion**

The **Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project is an unnecessary and harmful transmission expansion** that would permanently scar Maryland's farmland, forests, and historic landscapes. The **data proves that new high-voltage transmission is not required to meet future electricity demand**, and alternative solutions can ensure reliability while **protecting our communities**.

House Bill 657 is a **critical piece of legislation** to ensure the PSC prioritizes alternatives before allowing destructive projects like the MPRP. By **maximizing the use of existing infrastructure and requiring greater scrutiny of new transmission proposals**, HB0657 will help protect Maryland's **land, environment, and economy** for generations to come.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to issue a **favorable report** on HB0657.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Joanne Frederick**

**President**

Stop MPRP, Inc.

joanne.frederick@stopmprp.com

443-789-1382