

HB0640 and HB0645 FAVORABLE.pdf

Uploaded by: Alice Chalmers

Position: FAV

HB0640 and HB0645 FAVORABLE

Alice Chalmers

14100 Falls Road

Cockeysville MD 21030

All open land whether natural resources (woodland, watersheds, wetlands) or agricultural land (preserved or not) is FINITE. Once it is constructed on, it will never return the value that it has provided to our state.

Agricultural land in particular is also “the production plant” of working farmers. Just because it isn’t a building doesn’t make it less of a critical production asset for these farmers and their livelihood.

Culturally we have to, as a small state, stop equating open land to “EASY TAKING” because developers can develop it at lower costs than redeveloping brownfield.

Top soil, the medium without which plants do not grow, takes hundreds of years per inch to reform and projections show that at this rate we could be depleting all of our top soil in the next 50 years.

For all the reasons above, in evaluating a large infrastructure project like transmission lines, we need to look at the best way to meet the goals, taking into account all available new technologies in energy production and storage, leveraging partnerships, and existing Rights of Ways (federal highways, abandoned industrial zones, unoptimized urban land).

We also need to honor the contracts that the State as agreed to on preserved land, with landowners that have forfeited their rights to build or have any commercial activity on their property, to see it be developed by foreign entities without a clear return of benefits to the Maryland community.

Thank you

HB0657-ECM_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko

Position: FAV



House Bill 657

Public Utilities - Alternatives to Construction of New Transmission Lines

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Economic Matters Committee

Date: February 20, 2025

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 657. This bill calls for additional considerations and requirements for transmission lines and requires the consideration of alternative routes.

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 657 is to respond to the Piedmont Project by requiring both the Public Service Commission and the applicant to more thoroughly justify a project’s proposed route and to consider alternatives. As transmission infrastructure upgrades may uniquely be accomplished by upgrading existing lines or using existing land, counties join the sponsor in wanting to protect the finite number of conserved lands.

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 657 a **FAVORABLE** report.

HB 657 - Alternatives to Construction of New Trans

Uploaded by: Grayson Middleton

Position: FAV



Educate. Advocate. Innovate.

Date: February 18, 2025
To: Members of the House Committee on Economic Matters
From: Grayson Middleton, Government Affairs Manager
Re: HB0657 - Public Utilities - Alternatives to Construction of New Transmission Lines – **Support**

Delmarva Chicken Association (DCA) the 1,600-member trade association representing the meat-chicken growers, companies, and allied business members on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and Delaware supports HB 657 and urges a favorable committee report.

HB 657 would require the Public Service Commission to examine alternatives to the construction of a new transmission line if the use of an alternative will best maintain historical, environmental, or agricultural preservation areas.

Over the last 50 years, the State of Maryland has spent considerable resources and attention on preserving agricultural lands. These programs were initiated to protect food supplies, preserve rural landscapes, and maintain a healthy ecosystem, among other reasons. These efforts have been enormously successful, and today the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) estimates that over 300,000 acres of agricultural land have been permanently preserved through their program.

However, agriculture faces constant development pressure. Recently, discussions on the siting of critically needed transmission lines have largely focused on agricultural areas. To ensure that the rich tradition of ag land preservation in Maryland endures and our commitments are upheld, we must make serious efforts to avoid preservation areas in development.

Preserving Maryland's agricultural and environmental resources requires policies that honor conservation commitments while supporting thoughtful growth. HB657 ensures that infrastructure expansion does not come at the expense of protected lands, reinforcing trust in preservation programs and aligning with the state's long-term sustainability goals. As such, we urge a favorable vote on HB 657.

Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at middleton@dcachicken.com or 410-490-3329.

Sincerely,

Grayson Middleton

Government Affairs Manager

FAV_HB0657_StopMPRPInc.pdf

Uploaded by: Joanne Frederick

Position: FAV



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 University¹, 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.

¹ 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

MOS HB0657 Utility Line Alternatives Feb 2025.pd

Uploaded by: Kurt Schwarz

Position: FAV



MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

February 18, 2025

Bill: <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2025RS/bills/hb/hb0657F.pdf>

Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on HB0657 –Public Utilities –Alternatives to Construcion of New Transmission

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) strongly supports HB0657. This bill would require the Public Service Commission to consider alternatives to construction of new transmission lines that would impact historical, environmental, or agricultural preservation areas, or in planned growth areas.

Overhead transmission lines fragment wildlife habitat, and are detrimental to those the depend on deep, forest interiors, such as Kentucky Warblers and Ovenbirds. North America has lost almost 30% of its birds since 1970.¹ Habitat destruction is a major source to that decline. HB0657 will preserve habitat and help preserve our bird and wildlife population.

We urge the Committee to issue a favorable report for HB0657, to protect historical, environmental, or agricultural preservation areas, and planned growth areas.

Kurt R. Schwarz
Conservation Chair Emeritus
Maryland Ornithological Society
www.mdbirds.org

¹ Rosenberg, Kenneth V. et al, Decline of the North American avifauna, Science, VOL 366, NO. 6451, 19 September 2019,
https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aaw1313?adobe_mc=MCORGID%3D242B6472541199F70A4C98A6%2540AdobeOrg%7CTS%3D1707754028

HB657 testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Renee Hamidi

Position: FAV



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118 W. Pennsylvania Avenue, Towson, Maryland 21204
P.O. Box 5402 Towson, Maryland 21285-5402

Committee: Economic Matters

Testimony on: HB657 “Public Utilities – Alternatives to Construction of New Transmission Lines”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 20, 2025

Valleys Planning Council, a non-profit that conserves land and resources, preserves historic character and maintains the rural feel and land uses in northwestern Baltimore County, urges a favorable report on HB657, which would expand the circumstances under which the Public Service Commission is required to examine alternatives to the construction of a new transmission line.

Energy transmission line building projects do not now require companies that build the projects to investigate alternatives to new lines. Companies are not required to consider any of a county’s provisions in its comprehensive plan to protect historical, environmental, or agricultural preservation areas. HB657 would require the PSC to examine alternatives that would maintain a County’s preservation areas and promote efficient service to the public. This bill could reduce costs to ratepayers and reduce the impact of increasing electrical energy needs on Maryland and its residents.

Valleys Planning Council urges a favorable report on HB657.

Renée Hamidi
Executive Director
Valleys Planning Council

Protect. Preserve. Enjoy.

Testimony in support of HB0657 - Public Utilities

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB0657_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
02/20/2025

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#0657 – FAVORABLE
Public Utilities - Alternatives to Construction of New Transmission Lines

TO: Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby and members of the Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0657, Public Utilities - Alternatives to Construction of New Transmission Lines

This bill is an environmental protection measure that seeks to preserve existing historical, environmental, or agricultural preservation areas from encroachment by new transmission lines. This bill will accomplish that goal by requiring the Public Service Commission to consider the impact of the development of overhead transmission lines on certain properties subject to an existing conservation easement in certain proceedings for a certificate of public convenience and necessity. It establishes that companies wishing to construct transmission lines must do due diligence to document whether alternatives exist that do not impact those areas. It will add protection of any overlap by the construction with certain lots, parcels, or tracts of land such as access roads that will cross the affected areas to provide entry to the site of the transmission lines.

Because of this bill the PSC will have added requirements for evaluation of construction of transmission line projects that takes into account added factors that can and will affect the quality of life and economies of affected jurisdictions and their residents. It will provide tools that can be used in evaluation of proposals by both local and regional transmission organizations for electrical infrastructure construction. It adds to the knowledge base on which an intelligent decision on permitting can occur. It also forces consideration of the ancillary impacts of these construction projects.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#0657.

MDFB - Support - HB657 Public Utilities - Alternat

Uploaded by: Tyler Hough

Position: FAV



Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035
410-922-3426 | www.mdfarmbureau.com

February 18, 2025

To: House Economic Matters Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: Support of HB657 Public Utilities - Alternatives to Construction of New Transmission Lines

On behalf of the nearly 8,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in favor of HB657 Public Utilities - Alternatives to Construction of New Transmission Lines. The bill requires the Public Service Commission to examine alternatives to the construction of a new transmission line if the use of an alternative will best maintain historical, environmental, or agricultural preservation areas.

HbB657 strengthens protections for Maryland's conserved lands by ensuring that infrastructure projects are carefully planned to minimize their impact on agricultural preservation and environmental conservation efforts. Conservation easements are a critical tool for safeguarding farmland, protecting natural resources, and promoting sustainable land use. However, these commitments are undermined when major infrastructure projects, such as transmission lines, disrupt preserved properties without adequate review or consideration of alternatives.

HB657 establishes a more responsible and balanced approach to infrastructure planning by requiring the Public Service Commission to assess the potential impacts of transmission lines on conservation easements and explore alternative routes. This common-sense measure respects the investments landowners, and the state has made in preservation while allowing for necessary infrastructure development in a way that minimizes harm to protected lands. By prioritizing careful planning, the bill helps maintain the integrity of conservation programs and encourages continued participation by landowners.

Preserving Maryland's agricultural and environmental resources requires policies that honor conservation commitments while supporting thoughtful growth. HB657 ensures that infrastructure expansion does not come at the expense of protected lands, reinforcing trust in preservation programs and aligning with the state's long-term sustainability goals.

I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB657 to protect our state's valuable conserved lands for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Tyler Hough
Director of Government Relations

Please reach out to Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org, with any questions

testimony FWA HB 657 powerlines 2025.pdf

Uploaded by: Emily Tarsel

Position: FWA

Emily Tarsell, LCPC

2314 Benson Mill Road
Sparks, Maryland 21152
February 20 , 2025

Favorable with Amendment HB 657 (SB 483)

Public Utilities - Alternatives to Construction of New Transmission Lines

Dear Chairman Wilson and Economic Matters Committee Members,

I am Emily Tarsell, a mother, licensed therapist and founder of Health Choice Maryland. We are all concerned about the environmental, economic and health impact of high intensity power lines. The MPRP issue has been the focus of great concern to many Marylanders whose property, homes, businesses, wildlife and health could be adversely affected.

This bill suggests looking into alternatives to the proposed MPRP project and includes suggestions regarding the use of existing power lines and reconductoring. **I want to emphasize that the reconductoring of existing power lines would need to carefully consider that many existing power lines are in residential and farming areas. We should be extremely careful that we would not be just transposing all of the negative effects of high voltage overhead power lines from one proposed area to become the burden of those in another area. What are the health threats of such increased exposure to those living near exiting lines and threats to the environment?**

Epidemiological studies have suggested that human exposure to electromagnetic fields induce an increased risk of developing malignant tumors. No adequate laboratory data have yet been available. However, the trend continues to show that [exposure to EMF and RFR at levels allowable under current federal public safety limits pose health risks.](#)

A journal article in the **International Journal of Hygiene Environment and Health** references a number of studies concerned about the health effects of EMF on humans which are still under investigation.

The existing lines were constructed 65 years ago and it is irresponsible to assume that say doubling the power load on those lines would be safe for those living in

the vicinity of the lines. We simply don't know what the impact would be. Therefore, I **propose an amendment to the bill that would require studies to investigate the effect of the increased high voltage power lines on humans, livestock and wildlife near such re-purposed lines.**

In spirit, we cautiously support HB 657 (which is similar to HB 829) with an Amendment **as one alternative** provided that Marylanders living near existing power lines are not thereby compromised. There are likely also multiple options to consider to meet Maryland's energy needs which might reduce or alter the need for overhead power lines.

Thank you.

Emily Tarsell, LCPC

HB0657_FWA_ScenicAmerica.pdf

Uploaded by: Tziporah Feldman

Position: FWA



February 18, 2025

Economic Matters Committee
House Office Building, Room 231
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

To the Maryland House Economic Matters Committee:

On behalf of Scenic America, the nation's only 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and protecting our country's scenic beauty, I am writing to express our strong support for Maryland House Bill 0657. The state's commitment to improving grid reliability and resiliency can be strengthened by utilizing underground transmission lines along existing rights-of-way (ROWS). Not only does undergrounding improve grid resilience—which is especially important in an era of weather events intensified by climate change—but also utilizes existing infrastructure to preserve and protect our most treasured landscapes. This bill represents an important step in modernizing Maryland's electrical grid by ensuring that overhead transmission lines are not the default option for meeting the state's growing electrical demand, while also actively preserving the integrity and beauty of our surroundings.

Scenic America advocates for policies that preserve scenic beauty and prevent visual blight, not only for economic growth but also to uphold the right of all individuals to live, work, and play in a visually appealing environment. Scenic America therefore endorses undergrounding for its ability to increase resiliency in the face of extreme weather and reliably deliver power equally across communities while preserving landscapes and community character. Scenic America applauds Delegate Pippy's introduction of House Bill 0657 to modernize Maryland's electrical infrastructure by encouraging the Public Service Commission to consider alternatives to new overhead transmission lines.

The need for statewide standards for undergrounding and co-location is especially evident in projects like the Piedmont Reliability Project. This proposed transmission line has raised serious concerns from residents and local governments in Frederick, Carroll, and Baltimore Counties due to its potential impact on farmland, conservation easements, and protected forest buffers. Without a clear, statewide approach to prioritizing undergrounding and co-location, projects like this are more likely to result in significant disruption to communities and scenic landscapes. Statewide transmission undergrounding provides a practical solution to address community concerns, protect sensitive areas, and respect property rights while addressing the electrical needs of the state. By strengthening the PSC's criteria, HB 0657 ensures that alternatives are carefully considered before any new transmission line is approved.

Despite the common belief that transmission lines are too expensive to underground, undergrounding transmission lines can prove to be a cost-effective method for electrical infrastructure. Although upfront costs may be higher than those of overhead line construction, underground lines require less maintenance and are more resilient through weather events, reducing long-term costs. Underground transmission lines likewise offer long-term savings through reduced vegetation management, lower operations and maintenance expenses, and increased resilience to climate disasters and wildfires.

From a construction standpoint, undergrounding within rights-of-way (ROWs) provides a key economic advantage by speeding up permitting, therefore reducing project timelines and costs. Additionally, because these areas are already considered environmentally disturbed areas, undergrounding in the ROW makes these projects exempt from arduous environmental assessments—reducing time, resources, and costs. Lastly, undergrounding in the ROW does not require the implementation of eminent domain, leading to less public opposition—an issue that has defined the current state of the Piedmont Reliability Project. Together, utilizing the ROW approach quickens permitting while minimizing legal battles and community backlash.

While Scenic America supports the investigation of alternatives to overhead transmission lines, we urge a stronger emphasis on scenic conservation when evaluating any overhead transmission line. We suggest that the section “Will best maintain historical, environmental, or agricultural preservation areas;” be amended to say, “Will best maintain historical, environmental, scenic, or agricultural preservation areas.” By expanding House Bill 0657 to address concerns of aesthetics and undergrounding, Maryland can effectively demonstrate that infrastructure expansion and visual conservation can go hand in hand.

Additionally, to better protect Maryland’s scenic, historical, and environmentally sensitive areas, we recommend that the bill’s language be strengthened to explicitly prioritize undergrounding as the preferred method for new transmission projects. Specifically, undergrounding should be the default approach along existing rights-of-way and in areas where visual impact, environmental preservation, and community concerns are key considerations. Likewise, the bill should include specific language that instructs the PSC to consider the implicit costs of overhead wires (e.g., vegetation management, overhead maintenance, natural disasters, and time required for permit) when considering overhead versus undergrounding.

While Scenic America generally opposes any overhead transmission line, we are aware that undergrounding all lines is impractical. We therefore encourage the prioritization of lines that go through sensitive areas, including public lands, historic sites, communities, and scenic areas. In cases in which undergrounding is not feasible, other methods should be considered to minimize visual impacts such as reconductoring, co-location with existing transmission lines, or avoiding scenically sensitive areas. By adopting these strategies, Maryland can modernize its infrastructure while preserving its unique and treasured landscapes for generations to come.

Thank you for your commitment to protecting Maryland's scenic beauty and ensuring a reliable and resilient energy infrastructure. Please do not hesitate to contact me at mark.falzone@scenic.org if I can provide further information or assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark Falzone". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mark" and last name "Falzone" clearly distinguishable.

Mark Falzone
President, Scenic America

BGE_ECM_LOI_House Bill 657 – Public Utilities – AI

Uploaded by: Dytonia Reed

Position: INFO

Letter of Information
Economic Matters
2/20/2025

House Bill 657 – Public Utilities – Alternatives to Construction of New Transmission Lines

Baltimore Gas and Electric Company (BGE) submits this letter to provide information regarding *House Bill 657 – Public Utilities – Alternatives to Construction of New Transmission Lines*. *House Bill 657* mandates that the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) examine alternatives to constructing new transmission lines, provided these alternatives are convenient for the service area, promote economic and public service, preserve historical, environmental, or agricultural areas, or avoid overlap with a lot, parcel or tract of land that is located in a planned growth area identified in the local jurisdictions comprehensive plan, or zoned for residential use or mixed use with a residential component. The bill states that “alternatives” include reconductoring existing transmission lines, utilizing rights-of-way, using existing transmission lines from other companies, and undergrounding a transmission line.

BGE is concerned that the bill adds unnecessary and overly prescriptive requirements to the CPCN statute, which will result in additional costs to all parties involved the CPCN process, including to the PSC and other State agencies that are actively involved in evaluating CPCN applications, as well as applicants. BGE is also concerned that this bill will add more time to an already lengthy CPCN procedural process, and that this could cause delays in the permitting of transmission projects that are needed to maintain the reliability of the transmission grid and to help facilitate the economic dispatch of power throughout the regional grid.

To construct a new overhead transmission line designed to carry more than 69,000 volts in Maryland, the PSC must issue a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) for the proposed project. The current CPCN process is rigorous, comprehensive in terms of the impacts it considers, and inclusive in terms of opportunities for public input and party review and scrutiny of proposed projects. Among other considerations, the PSC is already required to evaluate alternatives to the construction of new overhead transmission lines, including route alternatives to a new proposed transmission line. In considering alternatives to new overhead lines, the Commission already considers a wide range of environmental and socioeconomic impacts, including impacts on historic and agricultural resources. Additionally, the PSC is already required to consider local concerns with regard

BGE, headquartered in Baltimore, is Maryland’s largest gas and electric utility, delivering power to more than 1.3 million electric customers and more than 700,000 natural gas customers in central Maryland. The company’s approximately 3,400 employees are committed to the safe and reliable delivery of gas and electricity, as well as enhanced energy management, conservation, environmental stewardship and community assistance. BGE is a subsidiary of Exelon Corporation (NYSE: EXC), the nation’s largest energy delivery company.

Charles Washington | Brittany Jones | Guy Andes | Dytonia Reed | 410.269.5281



AN EXELON COMPANY to transmission line siting. Indeed, the PSC is required to hold joint public hearings on CPCN projects with local jurisdictions, unless the local jurisdictions decline, and the PSC is to give “due consideration” to the recommendations of each local jurisdiction where the proposed Transmission project would be located.

Transmission lines are necessary to transport electric energy across long distances. Because Maryland is a net importer of electric supply, the State must have transmission lines to access and transport electric power from other states in order to meet our state’s energy demands. Without this, Maryland would face outages. Lengthening an already long and rigorous CPCN process will delay, or derail needed power supply in Maryland at a time when the state is critically short of power. Delays in transmission projects can impact reliability making it more difficult to meet growing demand during peak times or extreme weather events. Without timely upgrades, energy delivery is more vulnerable to disruptions and emergent events impacting resilience. Slow project completion can lead to grid congestion and inefficiencies in the energy market, impacting energy prices and availability and deter necessary future investments and job growth. This added process will make these transmission projects more costly for customers.

Moreover, the bill amends current law that already requires consideration of alternatives to the construction of new transmission lines, including the potential use of existing rights of way, by adding certain specific considerations and adding a definition of “alternatives.” The Commission has the current authority to consider such issues. Adding specific types of “alternatives” to the statute may result in limiting the Commission’s discretion to consider different types of alternatives to new transmission lines that are not specifically called out by this Bill.

Lastly, *House Bill 657* would unnecessarily increase the cost of transmission projects and the time that it takes to permit them at the worst possible time, when Maryland needs to bolster its transmission infrastructure to meet growing demand and ensure safe and reliable power delivery to its citizens. Maryland’s transmission grid is already constrained, making electricity imports more expensive. BGE supports cost-effective solutions for resource adequacy that do not compromise safety, reliability, or affordability. The PSC already has the responsibility to address the concerns that this Bill would specifically prescribe by statute. Doing so threatens to diminish the Commission’s discretion in CPCN cases, bog down an already rigorous and lengthy CPCN review process and add unnecessary additional costs to the State agencies that are required to review CPCN applications.

BGE looks forward to continuing discussions with the bill sponsor and all stakeholders involved.

BGE, headquartered in Baltimore, is Maryland’s largest gas and electric utility, delivering power to more than 1.3 million electric customers and more than 700,000 natural gas customers in central Maryland. The company’s approximately 3,400 employees are committed to the safe and reliable delivery of gas and electricity, as well as enhanced energy management, conservation, environmental stewardship and community assistance. BGE is a subsidiary of Exelon Corporation (NYSE: EXC), the nation’s largest energy delivery company.

Charles Washington | Brittany Jones | Guy Andes | Dytonia Reed | 410.269.5281

HB0657 (SB0483) - LOC - Public Utilities - Alterna

Uploaded by: Landon Fahrig

Position: INFO



Maryland

Energy Administration

TO: Chair Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, and Members of the Economic Matters Committee
FROM: MEA
SUBJECT: HB 657 - Public Utilities - Alternatives to Construction of New Transmission Lines
DATE: February 20, 2025

MEA Position: LETTER OF CONCERN

This bill would potentially unduly restrict transmission development in the State, which threatens to reduce the reliability and resilience benefits of transmission or increase per-unit costs that can be imposed on residential and commercial ratepayers through retail rates.¹ The legislation broadens the Public Service Commission's ("the Commission") examination of alternatives from an existing transmission line to additional types of alternatives, yet restricts the alternatives considered to those that avoid any overlap with several types of real property subject to local jurisdiction: land located within a planned growth area or zoned for residential or mixed-residential use. The result could be elimination from consideration of an alternative with some interaction with such property that would ultimately impact significantly fewer –but not zero– lands than a new transmission line.

Further, the bill defines "alternative" through an exhaustive list that may inadvertently exclude existing and future alternative transmission technologies and limit the Commission's discretion. For example, deployment of grid-enhancing technologies (GETs), a collection of advanced sensors, controls, and analytical tools designed to optimize grid performance, is not included in the definition. This approach is more narrow than current law, in which "[t]he Commission shall examine alternatives to the construction of a new transmission line in a service area, including [but not limited to] the use of an existing transmission line of another company."²

Our sincere thanks for your consideration of this testimony. For questions or additional information, please contact Landon Fahrig, Legislative Liaison, directly (landon.fahrig@maryland.gov, 410.931.1537).

¹ <https://www.rstreet.org/commentary/state-permitting-challenges-electric-transmission/>

² <https://law.justia.com/codes/maryland/public-utilities/division-i/title-7/subtitle-2/section-7-209/>