

Tuesday, February 24, 2026

TO: Senator Brian Feldman, Chair of the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee, and Committee Members

FROM: Michelle Dietz, Director of Government Relations, The Nature Conservancy; Humna Sharif, Climate Adaptation Manager, The Nature Conservancy,

POSITION: Support SB 386 Electricity Transmission and Distribution, Energy Storage, and Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Fund (Lower Bills and Local Power Act of 2026)

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) supports SB 386 offered by Governor Moore and sponsored by Senator Ferguson. TNC's mission is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends. We work in more than 70 countries and all 50 states in the United States. With the support of more than one million members globally, TNC has been working to conserve, protect, and restore ecosystems and species for nearly 75 years around the world. Climate change threatens to undo decades of our successful conservation work and fundamentally alter our future. TNC is committed to helping reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to limit global warming to no more than 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial temperatures. This goal cannot be achieved without a rapid transition to a clean energy economy. A clean energy future will require a different approach to energy and transmission planning and procurement and a predictable and flexible energy system. Modifying the current approach is essential to the well-being of nature, our economy, our communities, and our planet.

SB 386 would allow Maryland to make critically needed efficiency improvements to our grid and help lower the cost of electricity for Marylanders. Under this bill, electric companies operating transmission lines that carry voltage in excess of 69,000 volts will be required to participate as a member of the Regional Transmission Organization. Applicants for a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity will also be required to submit at least one alternative proposal that utilizes Advanced Transmission Technologies (ATT) and meets energy demand more efficiently and cost-effectively. Alternative proposals will also include an analysis of the technical feasibility and system benefits of using ATTs as compared to the technologies used in the primary proposed project.

TNC is highly supportive of incentivizing the use of ATTs in the state. As our state's energy demand grows, and as more renewable energy, and distributed energy sources get connected to the grid, the traditional vertically integrated system design is no longer sufficient to meet Maryland's energy needs. Inclusion of ATTs in new transmission lines, such as grid enhancing technologies, high performance conductors, storage as transmission, advanced computations software, and other hardware upgrades can unlock our grid's potential to deliver safe, reliable and clean power to Marylanders in a more cost-effective way.

For example, inclusion of grid enhancing technologies, such as dynamic line rating (one of the provisions of this bill), can allow operators to make real time adjustments to electricity flow and increase transmission capacity by 10-30%¹. Dynamic line rating takes temperature and wind speed into account, rather than relying on static assumptions of physical conditions, with these grid enhancing technologies operators can safely boost power when weather conditions are right, thus allowing more power to be delivered during peak hours.²

While our organization is supportive of the legislation, TNC would like to request an amendment to the definition of ATTs used in the bill:

On Page 5, line 20, strike [.] and include (III) ENERGY STORAGE USED AS TRANSMISSION

HB40/SB201 and HB723/SB598 are other energy related bills introduced this session that include energy storage within the definition of ATTs. We believe this inclusion to be important for promoting reliable and cost-effective electric grid updates that would benefit Maryland's residents and economy. Without significant investments in stationary electrical energy storage, the current electric grid infrastructure will increasingly struggle to provide reliable, affordable electricity, and will jeopardize the transformational changes envisioned for a modernized grid. The intention of this amendment is to expand how state regulators think about ATTs in their evaluation of new transmission lines.

TNC is supportive of the Solar and Energy Storage Market Stabilization Program created by this legislation. The incentive-based structure of the proposed program and prioritization of shovel ready projects for funding access supports the overall goal of delivering reliable and cost-effective energy to Marylanders. We are also supportive of priority study and analysis of existing rights of way along state and inter-state highways for siting transmission lines and battery energy storage systems. We appreciate the inclusion of the Department of Natural resources (DNR) within the list of agencies being consulted during the rights of way feasibility assessment process. TNC would like to see the protection of sensitive ecosystems and conserved lands in Maryland continue to be a criterion when considering new transmission line development.

TNC recognizes the need for Maryland to support grid modernization strategies that use the latest technologies to meet our state's growing energy demand. It is imperative that utilities upgrade our grid as efficiently, cost-effectively, and rapidly as possible, while also protecting sensitive ecosystems and ensuring community buy-in during the process. We commend Governor Moore and his administration for introducing this forward-looking legislation to meet Maryland's energy distribution needs. **Therefore, we urge a favorable report on SB 386.**

¹ Miller, Y. (2025, January 15). *Advanced Transmission Technologies can help states meet growing energy demand*. The Pew Charitable Trusts. <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2025/01/advanced-transmission-technologies-can-help-states-meet-growing-energy-demand>

² Miller, Y. (2025, January 15). *Advanced Transmission Technologies can help states meet growing energy demand*. The Pew Charitable Trusts. <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/fact-sheets/2025/01/advanced-transmission-technologies-can-help-states-meet-growing-energy-demand>