

SUPPORT SB708

Topic: Pilot program for underground transmission lines; qualifying projects. Increases the maximum capacity of qualifying electrical transmission lines, for purposes of the pilot project for underground transmission lines, from 230 kilovolts to 500 kilovolts. The bill provides that the State Corporation Commission shall approve additional qualifying projects as part of the pilot program that traverse along highways in developed areas where the route of proposed transmission lines and towers traverse areas protected by a scenic easement, view shed easement, areas of registered historic designation, or areas of conservation easements. Under the bill, existing requirements for qualifying projects shall continue to apply to such new category of qualifying projects.

Bill Patron: Senator Perry

OVERVIEW:

This bill would expand the pilot program for undergrounding transmission lines to allow additional qualifying projects including 500kV transmission lines. It further requires pilot projects for 500kV lines to be paid for by the data center industry rather than all ratepayers.

Why this bill cannot be delayed until after the JLARC study:

- PJM 2022 Window 3 transmission projects in Loudoun, Fauquier, and Albemarle were approved on December 11th.
- FERC has already approved NextEra's request for reimbursement of its pre-construction costs and granted additional transmission rate incentives for Project 853 in Loudoun.
- The Golden to Aspen 500kV line is currently under review and will likely be submitted to the Virginia SCC later this year.
- Mitigation in the form of undergrounding these lines is needed now.

REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- The transmission line proposals to address unprecedented load growth call for new and innovative solutions. Allowing for a 500kV undergrounding pilot project would establish a new means for mitigating the impacts of these large lines.
- Mitigation strategies will increasingly be needed to address the load growth projected from data centers. This increases the options available for that mitigation.
- The data center industry is necessitating the new 500kV lines corridors and causing the impacts resulting from the new right-of-way acquisition and transmission line construction along the way which is why it is appropriate for them to pay the cost of the infrastructure. Placing this cost on the industry protects the ratepayers from this additional cost burden.



Piedmont Environmental Council
Julie Bolthouse
jbolthouse@pecva.org
540-347-2334 x7042



Virginia Conservation Network
Wyatt Gordon, Land Use & Transportation
Policy Sr. Manager
wyatt@vcnva.org
Wyatt: (804) 429-7765

This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)'s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia's conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker. VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources today and for tomorrow.