



April 14th 2023

Honorable Glenn Youngkin
PO Box 1425
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Youngkin,

On behalf of the Northern Virginia Chamber and the Mount Vernon-Springfield Chamber, we want to express our support for the proposed pilot program for underground electrical distribution lines on U.S. Route 1 in Fairfax County. Both of our Chambers strongly supported the legislation (HB1637/SB1370) that would have allowed this to move forward.

The final bill that passed both chambers of the General Assembly included language which would allow Dominion to engineer, construct and operate underground distribution lines but was removed in your proposed substitute. We ask that you please consider approving the bill that passed the General Assembly.

The Virginia Department of Transportation and Fairfax County are currently collaborating on a \$900 million road widening and bus rapid transit project that leverages \$460 million of federal New Starts grant funds and will result in billions of dollars of investments in this revitalization corridor. Underground utilities are standard in high-density mixed-use developments, provide more reliable service and remove visual clutter. It will also free up more above ground space for multimodal transportation options.

The most cost-effective time to underground utilities is when the right of way is under construction for infrastructure improvement. The cost property owners will incur to do it later is significant and detrimental to commercial real estate assets. Furthermore, it will disincentivize redevelopment of the Route One Corridor. In addition, a large portion of the corridor is covered by Opportunity Zones which validates the need for investment and public-sector support to spur private-sector development. This is a prime opportunity for the Commonwealth to invest in a region that is brimming with economic development potential.

Finally, the County previously evaluated the feasibility of alternative funding mechanisms such as special tax districts or tax increment financing. The commercial parcels are not of the size, density, or wealth to create sufficient value to tax and fund this improvement.



Our respective Chambers appreciate the time your team has spent providing policy recommendations on hundreds of new laws. Approving this pilot program will be a significant step toward bringing our community up to modern infrastructure standards, while accomplishing several of your Administration's policies that we strongly support including affordable housing, job creation and economic development.

Sincerely,

Julie Coons
President and CEO
Northern Virginia Chamber of
Commerce

Holly Hicks Dougherty
President
Mount Vernon Springfield Chamber of
Commerce



CC: Senator Richard Saslaw
Speaker Todd Gilbert
Secretary Caren Merrick