

# *The Town of New Market*



February 13, 2025

Frederick H. Hoover, Chair  
Maryland Public Service Commission  
6 Saint Paul Street, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Baltimore, MD 21202

Dear Chair Hoover,

As the elected leaders of the Town of New Market, located in Frederick County, we are writing to formally express our strong opposition to the proposed alignment of the new 70-mile, 500kV transmission line from southern Pennsylvania to the Doubs substation in southern Frederick County.

We understand that these proposals, put forth by the Public Service Enterprise Group (PSEG), are part of a larger regional utility system upgrade under the Pennsylvania-New Jersey-Maryland (PJM) Interconnection initiative. While we recognize the necessity of addressing the long-term electrical needs of the region, we have serious concerns about the impacts of the proposed Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP) on our community.

## **Concerns Regarding the Proposal**

### **1. Lack of Transparency and Justification**

To date, there has been insufficient public information justifying the necessity of these new transmission lines. The lack of communication from PJM and PSEG has left residents in the dark about the scope and rationale for the project, fostering frustration and distrust.

### **2. Community and Environmental Impacts**

The proposed alignments will significantly and negatively affect homes, businesses, farms (including those under agricultural preservation programs), and historic preservation sites. They will also disrupt environmentally sensitive natural resources, which local jurisdictions are required to protect under federal and state laws.

Additionally, the proposed alignments pose a serious threat to Frederick County's burgeoning agritourism industry, an important sector for the local economy, as well as property values in New Market and surrounding areas.

3. **Potential Use of Eminent Domain**

The potential use of eminent domain to expedite the project's completion raises significant concerns within our community. This approach often displaces residents and businesses, threatens farmland, and undermines the trust and stability of our local economy.

4. **Dismissal of Alternatives**

It is troubling that the possibility of using existing rights of way (ROW) or collaborating with Baltimore Gas and Electric (BG&E) to reconstruct or "reconductor" existing lines has been dismissed without substantial public discussion. Leveraging current infrastructure would reduce disruption and mitigate the adverse effects on Maryland jurisdictions.

## **Recommendations to the Public Service Commission**

We urge the Public Service Commission to deny PSEG's current application for the MPRP and to consider the following actions:

- **Reevaluate Alignment Alternatives:** Urge PJM to prioritize solutions that utilize existing BG&E ROW, consistent with recent decisions such as the August 7, 2024, NextEra proposal in Loudoun County, Virginia.
- **Collaborate with BG&E:** Encourage PJM to partner with BG&E to reconstruct or "reconductor" existing transmission lines, allowing for increased capacity within the current ROW and minimizing community disruption.
- **Review Award Process:** Confer with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to ensure PJM's award of the project to PSEG was conducted properly and in the public interest.
- **Ensure Compliance with FERC Order 1920:** Engage with FERC to verify that PJM's application, when submitted by PSEG, complies with FERC Order 1920 and accurately anticipates the region's energy needs.

## **Commitment to Transparency**

We support a thorough, transparent, and inclusive public process before a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) is issued. It is essential that this process provides stakeholders with access to comprehensive information about the necessity and impacts of the proposed project.

Unfortunately, the public has so far been inadequately informed, with residents learning of the proposal primarily through informal channels such as social media. This lack of transparency

undermines public confidence and fails to meet the standard of open communication expected for projects of this magnitude.

## Closing

We acknowledge the need to enhance the resiliency and reliability of the regional power grid, but the MPRP as currently proposed will cause significant and lasting harm to our community. By exploring less disruptive alternatives and engaging with stakeholders in a transparent and collaborative manner, we believe a balanced solution can be achieved.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns and respectfully request that the PSC takes the outlined recommendations into serious consideration.

Sincerely,

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Winslow F. Burhans III, Mayor

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Matthew Chance, Councilman

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Dennis Kimble, Councilman

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Shane Rossman, Councilman

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Chris Weatherly, Councilman

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Michael Wright, Councilman

cc:     The Honorable Governor Wes Moore  
          The Honorable County Executive Jessica Fitzwater  
          Frederick County Council Members  
          Frederick County Delegation  
          Theresa Kuhns, CEO, The Maryland Municipal League