

Recommendations to Facilitate Siting New Electrical Transmission Infrastructure in Existing State Highway Rights-of-Way

Chapters 28 & 29 Department of Transportation Work Group Report

The identical Chapters 28 and 29 of the 2026 Acts of Assembly (formerly HB 889 and SB 497) made it the policy of the Commonwealth that existing linear infrastructure corridors shall be prioritized over new corridors for the siting of high-voltage transmission lines. Additionally, the chapters directed the Department of Transportation to convene a work group of stakeholders to identify opportunities and develop recommendations to amend regulations and processes to facilitate the “...expedient and efficient siting of new electrical transmission infrastructure in existing state highway rights-of-way” and to report its findings and recommendations to the House and Senate Committees of Labor and Commerce and Commerce and Labor, respectively. [A copy of Chapter 28 is provided as Appendix A to this report.](#)

The assembled work group consisted of the following members:

Jamie Bitz	Energy Commission of Virginia
Tyrone Brooks Bob Fasick	NextGen Highways
Sam Brumberg	VMD Association of Electric Cooperatives
Michael Cizenski	State Corporation Commission (SCC)
Robert Hofrichter	Virginia Department of Transportation
Robert Kell	Clean Air Task Force
Scott Kennedy	Appalachian Power
Joe Lerch	Virginia Association of Counties
Laura Meadows	Dominion Energy
Mitchell Smiley	Virginia Municipal League

The group met ~~x (5?)~~ five times, discussing the technical aspects of transmission lines and required plant, vegetation, regulations (principally, 24 VAC 30-151), planning for transmission lines and highway projects, and the permitting process. The results of those discussions and specific recommendations are set out in this report.

Technical Issues

The longitudinal siting of overhead power transmission lines in highway rights-of-way must take into consideration several [technical](#) factors:

1. Required clearance (both horizontal and vertical) for power lines.

Required clearance is based upon structure type and voltage and can result in required blowout clearances and avoidance of induced voltage on adjacent metallic structures from the outside conductor of between 35 to 42 feet or more, which gives preferred overall transmission line right-of-way widths of 135 to 255 feet or more. Highway rights-of-way vary between 30 feet (for prescriptive secondary highways) to over 200 feet (for multilane Interstates). This means that even if transmission structures are placed within highway right-of-way, it is likely that the utility will still need additional right-of-way on adjoining land, but that this would reduce the overall needed utility-only right-of-way.

2. Highway clear zone criteria.

Each highway must have a clear zone adjacent to the travel lanes for vehicles to recover if they inadvertently run off the road. This clear zone must be free of fixed objects. The width of the clear zone, between 7 to 20 feet which may be as much as 46 feet on an Interstate highway, varies based upon speed, traffic volume, and embankment grade, but can be reduced if the fixed object is protected; such protection is generally guardrail; though this is used as a “last resort,” as guardrails since it is still something that can be struck by errant vehicles. Transmission line structures are fixed objects.

3. Clearance with Highway signs and other structures.

Sign heights range from 11 feet (simple single pole mounted signs) to over 25 feet (overhead gantry signs on Interstates). High-mast lighting can be over 120 feet. All these require any adjacent transmission lines to be elevated or adjusted horizontally to prevent having the highway structures too close to the transmission lines, or have highway structures adjusted at the utilities expense, in accordance with law.

The longitudinal siting of underground power transmission lines utilizes duct banks, whose cross-sectional dimensions vary, but a 2 x 4 conduit bank can be 5-feet wide by 2.5-feet tall and a 3 x 4 conduit bank increases the height to 3.75 feet tall. The top of these duct banks is at least 3 feet below ground level. Larger duct banks can may be required in some cases. Many highways have cross drains and culverts underneath the pavement carrying water across the road. The location of these water-carrying facilities must be considered when planning underground transmission line installation.

Because of all of the above issues, it appears that the most useful location of transmission lines is along limited access (or some major non-limited access) highways that have comparatively wide rights-of-way, providing for separation between the transmission line and vehicular traffic or, for other highways, locating transmission lines immediately

adjacent to highway right-of-way so that power lines overhang the highway or a portion of the required clearance around power lines overlaps with highway right-of-way.

Vegetation

Most installation of transmission lines in highway rights-of-way will require the removal of trees and recurring vegetation control. Stabilization of the right-of-way and replanting to achieve some level of scenic restoration is necessary. This can be an opportunity to remove invasive and increase native and nativar species and provide additional pollinator habitats.

The Commonwealth Transportation Board has a 2001 Brush and Tree Trimming Policy that requires approval for certain tree removals to be provided by the District Environmental Manager, which adds another layer of review.

Chapter 626 of the 2026 Acts of Assembly (formerly HB 549) directs the Institute for Coastal Adaptation and Resilience to convene a work group to conduct a comprehensive review of tree canopy laws and regulations, which, in part, is aimed at increasing tree canopy in a manner that balances environmental and economic development alternatives.

Process

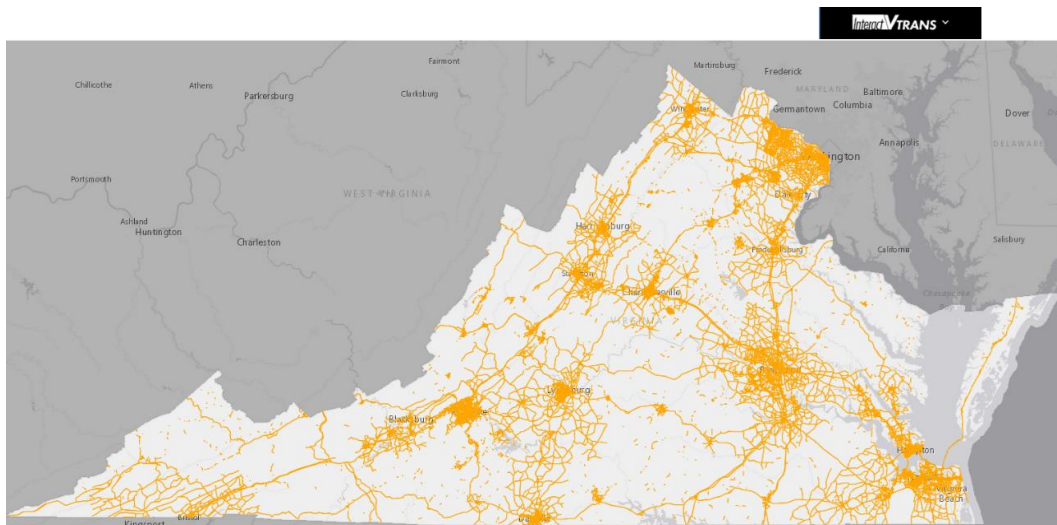
Two process recommendations came from the work group. Project planning would be enhanced by passing information between power providers and VDOT on potential future projects (both highway projects and power transmission line projects). In high activity areas, it would be useful to have periodic (quarterly or semi-annual) information status meetings between the power industry and VDOT.

Highway project planning is primarily contained in two documents: Virginia's Transportation Plan (VTRANS, for long range and mid-term planning) and the Six-Year Improvement Program (SYIP, for a 6-year look ahead).

VTRANS has 4 major sections: i) Vision/Guiding Principles, Goals and Objectives; ii) Transportation Needs and Priorities; iii) Long-term Risk & Opportunity Register; and iv) Strategic Actions. Sections i, iii, and iv are more policy level guidance that inform what is recommended. Section ii includes a list of mid-term level needs and is provided in a GIS format at [InteractVTrans | VTrans](#), but does not recommend specific projects; rather, it

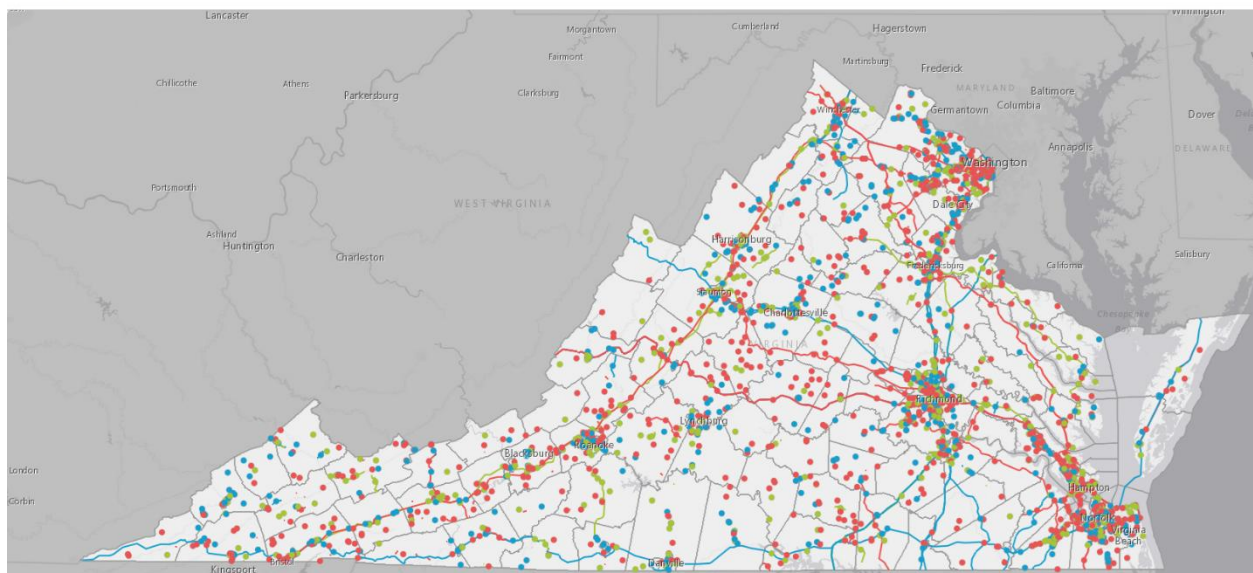
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provides the comparative needs along various highway corridors. At least some of these needs would be addressed in some way through projects that make it into the SYIP.



The SYIP sets out a brief description, limits, and the funding for specific projects. It can be found at <https://syip.virginiadot.org/Pages/allProjects.aspx> as a searchable database and at [SYIP Approved Projects](#) as a GIS. This plan is updated annually. Unfortunately, the SYIP only includes projects funded by localities or transportation commissions if those projects are supplementing money allocated by the Commonwealth Transportation Board, so does not contain the entire list of projects that can be expected.

SYIP Approved Projects



The Virginia Utility Coordinating Committee provides a venue for information sharing at a high level, but more detailed and focused information sharing would be beneficial. Periodic information meetings between VODT districts and industry should be held so that the latest information on plans and current projects can be shared between the parties. For VDOT, attendance at such meetings should include land use and utilities staff, with potential participation by environmental, preliminary engineering and construction staff. Power line activity would determine the frequency of such meetings; Dominion has found that quarterly meetings are helpful in Northern Virginia District, but that frequency is likely too much for rural districts with limited activity. In these areas, the utility would contact and meet with the local district engineering team concerning any proposed transmission line project to exchange information early in the development process. Specifically reviewed would be (i) viability of co-locating and using highway corridors; (ii) avoiding any future conflicts and relocations; and (iii) maintaining technical requirements and clearances.

The placement of high voltage transmission lines generally requires the approval of the State Corporation Commission, which conducts a thorough review of the proposal, including need for the project, proposed corridor and viable alternatives, line design, and proposed project impacts (scenic, environmental, historic, health). This suggests two contact points with VDOT—first being a general “co-location with highway” viability (and the design elements needed to make that possible), which would come before the SCC’s evaluation, and the final plan review and permit assembly approval, which would come after SCC approval of the project and its location.

Note that the SCC Division of Public Utility Regulation’s *Guidelines for Transmission Line Applications* includes an Attachment 1 which provides guidance for submissions and states, in items 25, 26, 29, and 32 that transmission facilities should be located such that they are at least partially screened from highways, which is incompatible with co-location on highway rights-of-way.

VDOT issued approximately 2700 permits related to electric utility work in fiscal year 2026. The average time to issue a permit from complete permit request submittal was 15 days, and 80% of permits were issued within 27 days.

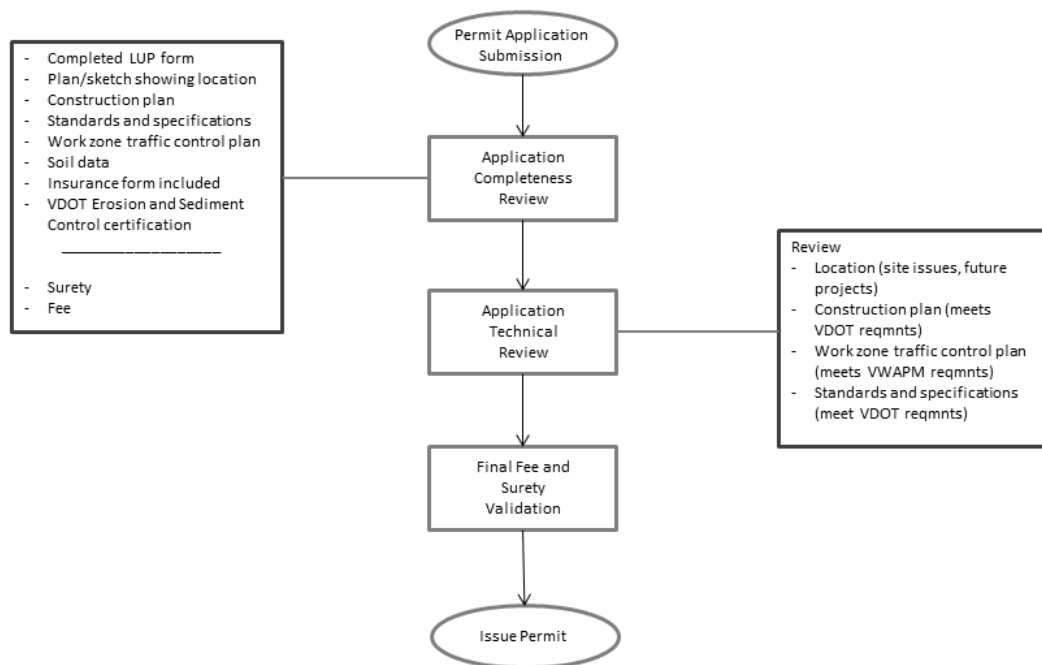
In order to secure a land use permit for working or occupying the highway right-of-way, ~~a utility must~~ a utility must submit an application that includes plans for the facility being requested, traffic control that is planned to be utilized, timing of the construction, restoration of the right-of-way, the standards and specifications of the items being used,

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proof of insurance, surety, and permit fee. If the proposed installation is longitudinal within limited access right-of-way, the applicable resource sharing agreement or exemption must also be provided.

VDOT's land use permit process for a simple, non-limited access request is outlined in the chart on the next page.

Utility Permit Review Process Chart



Regulations

The principal topics of work group discussion with regard to potential changes in regulations related to the Land Use Permit Regulations (24 VAC 30-151) and the following elements:

- Clarity and definitions
- Median installations
- Requirements for placement along limited access highways
- Scenic highways
- Tree removal, vegetation control, and replacement plantings

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Specific regulatory changes recommended by the work group are included in Appendix [AB](#).

Appendix A

CHAPTER 28

An Act to direct the Department of Transportation to identify opportunities for siting certain transmission lines in existing state highway rights-of-way; report.

[H 889]

Approved March 31, 2026

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. That in the siting of new electric transmission facilities, including high-voltage transmission lines, it is the policy of the Commonwealth that existing linear infrastructure corridors, including existing utility corridors and highways corridors, shall be prioritized over new corridors. Consideration of priority corridors shall be done to the greatest extent such prioritization is feasible and in a manner that is (i) consistent with economic and engineering considerations, (ii) ensuring reliability of the electric grid, and (iii) protective of cultural and historical resources and the environment.

§ 2. That the Department of Transportation shall convene a work group of relevant stakeholders, including the State Corporation Commission and members of the Virginia Utility Coordinating Committee, to identify opportunities and develop recommendations to amend regulations and permitting processes to facilitate the expedient and efficient siting of new electrical transmission infrastructure in existing state highway rights-of-way. The work group shall submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Chairs of the House Committees on Labor and Commerce and Transportation and the Senate Committees on Commerce and Labor and Transportation by November 1, 2026.

Appendix AB

Part I. Definitions

24VAC30-151-10. Definitions.

The following words and terms when used in this chapter shall have the following meanings unless the context indicates otherwise:

"Backfill" means replacement of suitable material compacted as specified around and over a pipe, conduit, casing, or gallery.

"Boring" means a method of installation that is done underground and by which a carrier or casing is jacked through an oversize bore. The bore is carved progressively ahead of the leading edge of the advancing pipe as soil is forced back through the pipe. Directional drilling, coring, jacking, and other similar trenchless digging methods are also considered boring.

"Carrier" means a pipe directly enclosing a transmitted liquid or gas. "Casing" means a larger pipe enclosing a carrier.

"Central office permit manager" means the VDOT employee assigned to provide management, oversight, and technical support for the VDOT land use permit program.

"Chief Engineer" means the VDOT employee in overall supervision of engineering functions for VDOT or that employee's designee.

"Clear zone" means the total border area of a roadway, including any parking lanes or planting strips, that is sufficiently wide for an errant vehicle to avoid a serious accident.

"Commissioner of Highways" means the individual serving as the chief executive officer of the Virginia Department of Transportation or a designee.

"Conduit" means an enclosed tubular runway for carrying wires, cable, or fiber optics.

"Cover" means the depth of the top of a pipe, conduit, or casing below the grade of the roadway, ditch, or natural ground.

"Crossing" means any utility facility that is installed across the roadway, either perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the roadways or at a skew of no less than 60 degrees to the roadway centerline.

"District administrator" means the VDOT employee assigned the overall supervision of the departmental operations for one of VDOT's construction and maintenance districts.

"District administrator's designee" means the VDOT employee assigned by the district administrator to supervise land use permit activities.

"Drain" means an appurtenance to discharge liquid contaminants from casings.

"Encasement" means a structural element surrounding a pipe.

"Erosion and sediment control" means the control of soil erosion or the transport of sediments caused by the natural forces of wind or water.

"Grounded" means connected to earth or to some extended conducting body that serves instead of the earth, whether the connection is intentional or accidental.

"Highway," "street," or "road" means a public way for purposes of vehicular travel, including the entire area within the right-of-way.

"Limited access highway" means a highway especially designed for through traffic, over which abutters have no easement or right of light, air, or access by reason of the fact that their property abuts upon such limited access highway.

"Longitudinal installations" means any utility facility that is installed parallel to the centerline of the roadway or at a skew of less than 60 degrees to the roadway centerline.

"Median" means the portion of a divided highway that separates opposing traffic flows.

"Non-betterment cost" means the cost to relocate an existing facility as is with no improvements.

"Permit" means a document that, in conjunction with the laws of the Commonwealth, sets the requirements, terms, and conditions under which VDOT allows a right-of-way to be used or changed by a permittee.

"Permit agreement" means an agreement supplementary to a permit that sets out additional conditions for the enjoyment of the permit that have been agreed to by the permittee and VDOT.

"Permittee" means the person, firm, corporation, entity, or government entity that has been issued a permit.

"Pipe" means a tubular product or hollow cylinder made for conveying materials.

"Pole line" means poles or a series or line of supporting structures, such as towers, cross arms, guy wires, racks (conductors), ground wires, insulators, and other materials assembled and in place for the purpose of transmitting or distributing electric power or communication, signaling, and control. It includes appurtenances such as transformers,

fuses, switches, grounds, regulators, instrument transformers, meters, equipment platforms, and other devices supported by poles. For electric lines, this also includes blowout clearances.

"Power transmission line" is an overhead or underground facility for the transmission of electrical power from a generation source to substations or between substations, designed for a voltage level of 69 kV or above.

"Professional engineer" means a person who is qualified to practice engineering by reason of special knowledge and use of mathematical, physical, and engineering sciences and the principles and methods of engineering analysis and design acquired by engineering education and experience, and whose competence has been attested by the Virginia Board for Architects, Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors, Certified Interior Designers and Landscape Architects through licensure as a professional engineer.

"Relocate" means to move or reestablish existing facilities.

"Right-of-way" means that property within the system of state highways that is open or may be opened for public travel or use or both in the Commonwealth. This definition includes those rights-of-way in which the Commonwealth has a prescriptive easement for maintenance and public travel. The property within a right-of-way includes the travel way and associated boundary lines and the area in between, the subsurface below and air above the property, parking and recreation areas, rest and service areas, and other permanent easements for a specific purpose appurtenant to the right-of-way.

"Roadside" means the area adjoining the outer edge of the roadway. The median of a divided highway may also be considered a "roadside."

"Roadway" means the portion of a highway, including shoulders, for vehicular use. A divided highway has two or more roadways.

"Service connections" means any utility facility installed overhead or underground between a distribution main, pipelines, conduits, lines, wires, or other sources of supply and the premises of the individual customer.

"Shared resource agreement" means an agreement or permit allowing one or more utilities to occupy the limited access right-of-way consistent with the requirements of 24VAC30-151-30 and 24VAC30-151-740.

"System of state highways" means all highways, streets, and roads under the ownership, control, or jurisdiction of VDOT, including the primary, secondary, and interstate systems.

"Transportation project" means a project in development or under construction to provide a new public transportation facility or to improve or maintain the existing system of state highways.

"Traveled way" means the portion of the roadway for the movement of vehicles, exclusive of shoulders and auxiliary lanes.

"Trenched" means installed in a narrow, open excavation.

"Underground utility facilities" means any item of public or private property placed below ground or submerged for use by the utility.

"Utility" means a privately, publicly, or cooperatively owned line, facility, or system for producing, transmitting, or distributing telecommunications, cable television, broadband, electricity, gas, oil, petroleum products, water, steam, stormwater not connected with highway drainage, or any other similar commodity, including any fire or police signal system.

"VDOT" means the Virginia Department of Transportation.

"Vent" means an appurtenance to discharge gaseous contaminants from a casing or carrier pipe.

"Wetlands" means those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas.

24VAC30-151-40. General rules, regulations, and requirements.

A. A permit is valid only on right-of-way under VDOT's jurisdiction and on VDOT-owned property. County and city permits must be secured for work on roads and streets under the county or city jurisdictions. A permit covers the actual performance of work within right-of-way and the subsequent maintenance, adjustments, or removal of the work as approved by the central office permit manager or the district administrator's designee. The Chief Engineer shall approve all activities within limited access right-of-way prior to permit issuance. A permit must be obtained by the owner of the facility to be used or located within right-of-way or VDOT-owned property or the adjacent property owner in the case of entrance permits. A permit may be issued jointly to the owner and contractor if the contractor is the owner's authorized agent. The permittee and the permit's contractors and agents shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and requirements. The

terms of every permit include and incorporate by reference this chapter as well as all federal, state, and local requirements applicable to a permittee's activities under the permit.

B. Application shall be made for a districtwide permit through the central office permit manager and for single use permits through the district administrator's designee responsible for the county where the work is to be performed. The applicant shall submit site plans or sketches for proposed installations within the right-of-way to VDOT for review, with studies necessary for approval. VDOT may require electronic submission of these documents. Applicants are encouraged to submit work of a continuous nature along one route, or connected routes within one jurisdiction, into one permit application regardless of length. The applicant shall also submit any required certifications for staff performing or supervising the work, and certification that applicable stormwater management requirements are being met. The plans shall include the ultimate development and also any applicable engineering design requirements. VDOT retains the authority to deny an application for or revoke a land use permit to ensure the safety, use, or maintenance of the highway right-of-way, or in cases where a law has been violated relative to the permitted activity.

C. The permittee shall comply with the terms of the permit. The permittee shall construct and use each facility proposed to be used or installed pursuant to a permit exactly as shown on the approved permit application, including. Permit application plans shall, as appropriate:

1. ~~Showing~~Show distances from edge of pavement; existing and proposed right-of-way lines; depths below or above existing and proposed grades, ~~depths below and ditch lines~~ or underground drainage structures, or, proposed profiles and plans; temporary construction facilities such as construction entrances; work zone traffic control plans; and other relevant features.
2. ~~Showing~~Show any existing utilities within close proximity of the applicant's proposed work or use.
3. ~~Showing~~Show the location of poles, guy wires, pedestals, relief valves, vent pipes, and other equipment or structures.
4. ~~Showing~~Show the height of wires or cables above the crown of the roadway.
5. For power transmission lines, (A) a maintenance plan that includes tasks and schedule, and (B) an environmental access plan detailing the methods to avoid or mitigate sensitive environmental areas during facility construction if required by the State Corporation Commission (SCC).

D. In the event of an emergency situation that requires immediate action to protect persons or property, work may proceed within the right-of-way without authorization from the district administrator's designee; however, the permittee must contact the VDOT Emergency Operations Center as soon as reasonably possible but no later than 48 hours after the end of the emergency situation.

E. The permit is not valid unless signed by the central office permit manager or the district administrator's designee.

F. The permittee shall secure and maintain commercial general liability insurance to protect against liability for personal injury and property damage in connection with all activities undertaken under a permit. Comprehensive general liability insurance with limits of at least \$1 million per occurrence and \$5 million aggregate or in amounts otherwise required by VDOT as stated in the permit shall be maintained at all times. Insurance must be obtained prior to start of permitted work and shall remain valid through the permit completion date. The central office permit manager or the district administrator's designee may require a valid certificate of insurance or policy documents from the issuing insurance agent or agency prior to issuing a permit.

G. The permittee assumes full responsibility for all damages caused by facilities installed or uses undertaken under a permit. The permittee must make every effort to install facilities in a manner to preclude the possibility of damage.

H. The permittee is responsible for the continued maintenance of facilities placed within a right-of-way.

I. VDOT and the Commonwealth shall be absolved from all responsibilities, damages, and liabilities associated with granting the permit and the permittee's activities in the right-of-way, including activities performed by the permittee's contractors or agents. All facilities shall be placed and maintained in a manner to preclude the possibility of damage to VDOT-owned facilities or other facilities placed within the right-of-way by permit. A permittee shall indemnify and hold harmless the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth Transportation Board, the Commissioner of Highways, VDOT, and the consultants, representatives, agents, and employees of those agencies from and against any and all claims, causes of action, losses, costs, attorney fees, expenses, and damages that directly or indirectly result from or arise out of the permittee's activities or violations in the right-of-way; from any of the permittee's contractors, subcontractors, consultants, representatives, agents, or employees; or from anyone for whom acts or violations the permittee is or may be liable. A permittee shall be civilly liable to the Commonwealth for all actual damage caused by a violation of the terms of a permit or this chapter.

J. A copy of the permit and approved site plans or sketches shall be maintained at every job site and such items made readily available for inspection when requested by VDOT or any authorized personnel. Strict adherence to the permit is required at all times. Any activity other than that described in the permit shall render the permit null and void. Any changes to the permit shall be coordinated and approved by the district administrator's designee prior to construction.

K. For permit work within the limits of a transportation project, the applicant must obtain the consent of the project's general contractor in writing before the permit will be issued. The permittee shall coordinate with VDOT and the project's general contractor and schedule all work within the limits of a transportation project to avoid conflicts with work of the transportation project.

L. All activity associated with the permit shall be in accordance with all federal, state, and local requirements and all applicable VDOT requirements, standards, and specifications and as otherwise required by the terms of the permit.

M. Disturbances within the right-of-way shall be kept to a minimum during permitted activities. Permit applications for proposed disturbances within the right-of-way that include disturbance on property directly adjacent to the right-of-way, in which the combined area of disturbance constitutes a land-disturbing activity as defined in § 62.1-44.15:24 of the Code of Virginia and the Virginia Erosion and Stormwater Management Program (Part II (9VAC25-875-40 et seq.) of 9VAC25-875), must be accompanied by documented approval of erosion and sediment control plans and stormwater management plans for the activity, as applicable, from the corresponding jurisdictional local or state government plan approving authority.

N. Restoration shall be made in accordance with VDOT standards and specifications as set forth in the terms of the permit and Part II of 9VAC25-875.

Additionally, the permittee shall:

1. Ensure compliance with the Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Program (Part III (9VAC25-875-210 et seq.) of 9VAC25-875).
2. Ensure copies of approved erosion and sediment control plans, stormwater management plans, if applicable, and all related non-VDOT issued permits are available for review and posted at every job site at all times.
3. Take all necessary precautions to ensure against siltation of adjacent properties, streams, or other bodies of water in accordance with VDOT's policies and standards

as specified in the terms of the permit and any applicable laws or regulations enforced by the State Water Control Board.

4. Keep dusty conditions to a minimum by using VDOT-approved methods.

5. Cut pavement only as approved by the district administrator's designee.

Pavement cuts, restoration, and compaction efforts, to include all materials, shall be accomplished in accordance with VDOT specifications as set forth in the terms of the permit.

6. Ensure that an individual certified by VDOT in erosion and sediment control is present whenever any land-disturbing activity under the permit is performed. All land disturbance activities performed under a permit shall be in accordance with all local, state, and federal requirements. The installation of underground facilities by a boring method shall only be deemed as a land-disturbing activity at the entrance and exit of the bore hole and not the entire length of the installation.

7. Stabilize all disturbed areas immediately upon the end of each day's work and reseed in accordance with VDOT specifications as set forth in the terms of the permit. Temporary erosion and sediment control measures shall be installed in areas not ready for permanent stabilization.

8. Ensure that no debris, mud, water, or other material is allowed on the highways. Permission, documented in writing or electronic communication, must be obtained from VDOT prior to placing excavated materials on the pavement. When so permitted, the pavement shall be cleaned only by approved VDOT methods.

O. Accurate "as built" plans and profiles of work completed under permit shall be furnished to VDOT upon request, unless waived by the district administrator's designee. For utility permits, the owner shall maintain "as built" plans, profiles, and records for the life of the facility that describe the utility usage, size, configuration, material, location, height or depth, clearance requirements (including blowout clearances if appropriate), and special features, such as encasement.

P. All work shall be performed in accordance with the Underground Utility Damage Prevention Act (Chapter 10.3 (§ 56-265.14 et seq.) of Title 56 of the Code of Virginia) and the Rules for Enforcement of the Underground Utility Damage Prevention Act (20VAC5-309). For work within 1,000 feet of traffic signals or adjacent to other VDOT utilities, the permittee shall contact the VDOT Customer Service Center. The permittee shall notify VDOT on the business day preceding 48 hours before excavation.

Q. Permission, documented in writing or electronic communication, must be obtained from the district administrator's designee prior to blocking or detouring traffic. Additionally, the permittee shall:

1. Plan construction and maintenance operations with regard to safety and minimum traffic interference.
2. Coordinate notification with all county or municipal officials.
3. Ensure that permitted work does not interfere with traffic during periods of peak flow on heavily traveled highways.
4. Plan work so that closure of intersecting streets, road approaches, and other access points is held to a minimum and as noted and approved in the permit documents.
5. Maintain safe access to all entrances and normal shoulder slope of the roadway across the entire width of the entrance.

R. The permittee shall be responsible for any settlement in the backfill or pavement after the completion of work activities under the permit or for any settlement caused by the installed facility.

Part VI. Utilities

24VAC30-151-300. General provisions governing utilities.

Utility installations on all rights-of-way shall comply with the following provisions:

1. Requests for accommodations of utility facilities within the right-of-way shall be submitted to and reviewed by the district administrator's designee.
2. Utility lines shall be located to avoid conflicts with existing VDOT infrastructure and minimize the need for later adjustments, to accommodate future highway improvements and transportation projects, and to allow servicing of the lines with minimum interference to traffic. VDOT retains the right to reject installations that do not address these factors. Utility facilities shall conform to the type of highway and specific conditions for the highway section involved. Utility facilities within the right-of-way and utility attachments to structures shall be of durable materials, designed for long service life, and be relatively free from the need for routine servicing and maintenance. All attachments to structures must be approved in advance by VDOT.

3. Any conflicts with existing utility or other facilities shall be resolved between the permittee and the owner of the other utility or facility.
4. No utility shall be attached to a **VDOT** structure unless the applicant or permittee can demonstrate that the installation and maintenance of the utility will not interfere with VDOT's ability to maintain the structure, will not impact the durability and operational characteristics of the structure, and, except for installation, will not require access to the facility from a limited access highway. The attachment method must be approved by VDOT (see 24VAC30-151-430).
5. The encasement of underground utility crossings shall be in accordance with 24VAC30-151-370.

24VAC30-151-310. Utility installations within limited access highways.

Utility installations on all limited access highways shall comply with the following additional provisions:

1. Requests for all utility installations within limited access right-of-way (including temporary construction access) shall be reviewed and, if appropriate, be approved by the Chief Engineer prior to permit issuance.
2. New utilities will not be permitted to be installed parallel to the roadway longitudinally within the controlled or limited access right-of-way lines of any highway, except that where other power transmission lines and other utilities where alternative locations are not in the public interest or under resource sharing agreements~~;~~, such installations may be permitted under strictly controlled conditions and only with approval of the Commissioner of Highways. The applicant must satisfy the following conditions, at a minimum:
 - a. That the installation will not adversely affect the safety, design, construction, operation, maintenance, or stability of the highway.
 - b. That the accommodation will not interfere with or impair the present use or future expansion of the highway.
 - c. That any alternative location would be contrary to the public interest. This determination would include an evaluation of the direct and indirect environmental and economic effects that would result from the disapproval of the use of such right-of-way for the accommodation of such utility.
Pursuant to Chapters 28 and 29 of the 2026 Acts of Assembly, power transmission lines satisfy this condition.

- d. No ~~tree~~ removal of healthy trees or severe tree trimming is required for the installation~~;~~ , except for power transmission line projects, for which tree removal is permitted but should be minimized to meet the line's safety and clearance requirements. Low-growing approved tree replacement may be considered in key visual areas so that clearance may be maintained.
3. Overhead and underground utilities may only be installed within limited access right-of-way under a shared resource agreement subject to VDOT's need for the shared resource.
4. All authorized longitudinal utility installations within limited access right-of-way shall be located ~~in a utility area established along as close to~~ the outer edge of the right-of-way as possible. Special exceptions must be approved by the Chief Engineer.
5. Authorized overhead utility installations within limited access right-of-way shall maintain a minimum of 21 feet of vertical clearance.
6. Authorized underground utility installations within limited access right-of-way shall have a minimum of 36 inches of cover.
7. Service connections to adjacent properties shall not be permitted from authorized utility installations within limited access right-of-way.
8. Overhead crossings shall be located on a line that is perpendicular to ~~the highway alignment~~ or within 30 degrees of perpendicular to the highway alignment. Exceptions may be approved by the Chief Engineer. All supports should be placed outside of the right-of-way but if that is not practicable, shall be placed to maintain adequate clear zone.
9. A utility access control line will be established between the proposed utility installation, the through lanes, and ramps~~;~~ , but power transmission lines may be allowed through interchanges to avoid adverse impacts to homes and businesses.

24VAC30-151-330. Overhead utility installations within nonlimited access highways.

- A. Overhead utility crossings shall be located on a line that is perpendicular ~~to the highway alignment~~ or within 30 degrees of perpendicular to the highway alignment; any greater skew will need an exception from the district administrator's designee and shall only be approved if appropriate documentation is provided showing the need for such skew.

Longitudinal installations shall be located on a uniform alignment as near as possible to the right-of-way line to provide a safe environment and space for future highway improvements and other utility installations.

B. Overhead longitudinal utilities may be installed on all nonlimited access highways by a public or private utility company under a permit, except in scenic areas, as follows:

1. Overhead utilities may be installed within nonlimited access right-of-way under permit, including a districtwide permit as allowed under 24VAC30-151-30 B 1.
2. All overhead installations, excluding wireless support structure facilities, shall be located adjacent to the right-of-way line and in accordance with clear zone requirements. Repairs and replacement of similar installations may be performed in existing locations under the existing permit, provided the work shall not impede the traveled way. Additional poles, taller poles, or cross-arms require a separate permit.

C. Longitudinal installations of overhead lines within the right-of-way shall be limited to single-pole construction. Joint-use, single-pole construction will be encouraged at locations where more than one utility or type of facility is involved, especially where the right-of-way widths approach the minimum needed for safe operations or maintenance requirements, or where separate installations may require extensive removal or alteration of trees. Exceptions will be reviewed and considered on a case-by-case basis with appropriate documentation showing the need for the alternate structures and that VDOT safety, operational, and maintenance requirements are addressed.

D. Consideration will not be given to poles placed on a highway right-of-way of less than 40 feet in width.

E. Highway crossings should be grouped at one location whenever practical, and as near as possible to right angles to the center of the road.

F. New overhead installations crossing existing or proposed nonlimited access highways shall provide a minimum of 18 feet of vertical clearance or at a minimum height as established by the standards and specifications set forth in the terms of the permit, whichever is greater. The overloading of telecommunications lines onto existing lines or strand is not considered a new overhead installation.

G. Existing overhead utilities that are found to be in horizontal or vertical conflict with proposed traffic control devices or signage shall be adjusted, at the permittee's expense, to provide an unobstructed view for the traveling public and the appropriate clearance from traffic control devices or signage. For power transmission lines whose route was approved by VDOT and the SCC, VDOT will make reasonable effort to avoid placement of facilities

and devices so as to require relocation of the line; but if there is no reasonable alternative, shall provide at least two years advance notice to the power transmission line owner of upcoming projects in VDOT's 6-year improvement program. Responsibility for the power transmission line relocation cost shall be in accordance with applicable law and executed agreements between the parties.

H. The vertical clearance for all new overhead installations parallel to an existing or proposed highway and within nonlimited access rights-of-way shall be in compliance with standards as specified in the terms of the permit. The overloading of telecommunications lines onto existing lines or strand is not considered a new overhead installation.

I. When crossing a median, all poles or other overhead facilities shall be placed to maintain an adequate clear zone in each direction.

J. ~~Longitudinal~~New (non-replacement or non-relocation) longitudinal pole line installation will not be allowed in the median, except for power transmission lines that meet all the following criteria and are approved by the Chief Engineer prior to permit issuance and are subject to a resource sharing agreement.

1. Median is sufficiently wide so that clear zone is maintained;
2. No project is scheduled for the highway segment in the current Six Year Improvement Program;
3. The locality's comprehensive plan does not designate this highway as needing widening or include some alternate future use of the median;
4. Access to the median for maintenance of the line can be accomplished safely and without undue interference with traffic;
5. The power transmission line is to be installed such that lines are sufficiently high so as not to interfere with potential traffic control devices or signage; and
6. The SCC, which is responsible for evaluating the visual and environmental impacts, has approved the alignment and issued a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN).

24VAC30-151-410. Utility installations in scenic areas.

Any new utility installations within the right-of-way or on other lands that were acquired or improved with federal-aid or direct federal highway funds, and are located within or adjacent to areas of scenic enhancement and natural beauty are discouraged. Such areas include public parks and recreational lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, historic sites, scenic strips, overlooks and scenic byways.

New power transmission lines on scenic highways should be located underground. If that is impractical and the SCC, which is responsible for evaluating the visual and

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environmental impacts and alternatives, has approved the overhead alignment and issued a CPCN, VDOT may permit the installation.

Any new utility installation in the above-mentioned areas shall be accordance with 23 CFR 645.209h.