

High Voltage Transmission Lines Threaten Our Communities—Not Just Our Land

By Tony Campbell

A threat is quietly looming over our mountain homes—one that won't just scar our landscape but could damage the economic, environmental, and social fabric of our communities for decades to come.

Two massive high-voltage transmission lines—the Mid-Atlantic Reliability Link (MARL) and the Valley Link—are being proposed to carry electricity across West Virginia to power data centers in Northern Virginia. These lines won't provide us with more reliable energy, cheaper rates, or cleaner air. Instead, they will carve 200-foot-wide paths through our forests, farms, and neighborhoods, tower up to 200 feet over our land, and impose lasting harm on property values, our environment, and ironically, even our power bills.

Let's be clear: these lines aren't being built to serve us. They're being built to meet Virginia's skyrocketing demand for electricity—demand driven by the world's largest concentration of power-hungry data centers. Virginia hasn't built a new base-load power plant in years and has legislated itself into an energy corner by outlawing new fossil fuel plants. So what's their solution? Ship the burden—literally—to West Virginia.

The MARL line will stretch 155 miles with 105 of those crossing counties including Mineral, Hampshire, and Jefferson. The Valley Link will extend an even more staggering 261 miles through 14 counties, including Hampshire and Hardy. While the energy might pass through our land, the benefits won't stop here.

In fact, West Virginians will be left paying the price—again.

A recent study by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis shows West Virginians will pay an additional \$440 million over 40 years on our electricity bills if these lines are approved—and we won't get a single new watt of energy from them. That's insult on top of injury, especially considering the thousands of acres of forest that will be bulldozed, the devaluation of properties, and the noise, traffic, and disruption from years of heavy construction.

And if you think this is only a problem for landowners in the direct path of the lines, think again. Once these towers go up, they set a precedent. More lines will come. The damage will spread. The companies behind these projects—NextEra, FirstEnergy, AEP, and Dominion—are already eyeing the future. If we don't stop them now, this is just the beginning.

But there is hope. We've stopped transmission lines before. In 2012, West Virginians came together to defeat the proposed Potomac-Appalachian Transmission Highline (PATH) line. We can do it again—but only if people act.

Now is the time to raise your voice. Join grassroots groups like ours and help spread the word. Write to the West Virginia Public Service Commission (PSC). Contact your state delegates and senators. Speak to Governor Patrick Morrisey. The PSC can stop these projects! They are appointed and report to Governor Morrisey.

This isn't just about protecting a few backyards. It's about protecting the future of our communities. Let's not allow corporate convenience and Virginia's unchecked data center boom to come at the cost of our land, our wallets, and our way of life.

STOP THE TOWERS! STAND FOR WEST VIRGINIA!