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8/18/24

Commissioners of the Virginia State Corporation Commission

PO Box 1197

Richmond, VA, 23218

Re: Support of Undergtrounging 500kV/230kV Transmission Lines along the Aspect to Golden Route, State Route 7

Dear Commissioners:

I write to express my staunch support for undergrounding the 500kV/230kV power transmission lines along the Aspect to Golden Route as described by Loudoun County's forward-focused undergrounding proposal. This proposal is critical to ensuring the County remains an appealing place to live, while accommodating the demanding energy and power grid needs of Loudoun as well as the Commonwealth of Virginia.

By way of personal background, about a year and a half ago, I bought a townhouse—one of 105 such units-- at what's called Regency of Belmont, an over-fifty-five community, located near the intersection of State Route 7 and Claiborne Parkway in Ashburn. None of us knew of the prospect of our homes being amid what may become a de facto industrial corridor, complete with yet another data center, and supporting infrastructure (massive sub-stations, high voltage 500kV transmission lines, and unsightly towers).

With 181 data centers located within a thirty-mile radius, Loudoun County has made itself home to the densest concentration of data centers on the entire planet. Data centers are established facts of modern life. They enable our digitally interconnected world, essential to the economy and security of not only this country, but many others as well. They constitute critical US infrastructure; they also generate voracious energy demands, with which traditional energy technologies have not kept pace.

As a consequence data center operators have been compelled to pursue new, self-reliance energy production and storage technologies that will potentially allow them to operate in the future wholly, or at least in part, off-the-grid. The energy supplier in this case, Dominion Energy, should be enjoined to pursue as aggressively as possible 21st century solutions for undergrounding. Any additional traditional above ground power transmission lines will only add to the visible blight for decades to come—long after less intrusive technologies make them antiquated. The area in the vicinity of Loudoun County Parkway and Route 606 serves as a vivid example of the industrialized maze of substations, overhead transmission lines, and looming towers that are the result of continued traditional solutions to meet exponentially growing demands for power.

Citizens in Loudoun have striven hard over at least the last 25 years to preserve and protect highly valued historic and scenic viewsheds. I speak for many other residents in urging the Virginia State Corporation Commissioners to adopt and compel a forward-looking energy strategy that provides power to residents and data centers that includes piloting new engineering technologies and techniques for undergrounding. Loudoun County's pilot program provides a roadmap for both ensuring that Loudoun Country remains a leader for the data center industry but preserves quality of life for people who live there.

I appreciate the Commissioners consideration of these issues, and the opportunity to express my views.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James R. Hopper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.