

GREATER REMINGTON
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Wynnona Engle-Pratt
President

Corey Jennings
Vice President

Samantha Horn
Secretary

Frances McGaffey
Treasurer

Board Members at Large

Sadie Baker
Michele Baskin
Peter Coyne
Megan Hamilton
Cheryl Knott
Mauricio Lainez
Dylan Maddox
Anne Rosenthal
Matt Williams

Manager of Operations
Jennifer McKenzie

**Opposing BGE's High Voltage Towers in South Remington:
Overview of Community Position**

*Prepared by neighbors of South Remington
and adopted as the official position of the
Greater Remington Improvement Association*

I. Executive Summary

Baltimore Gas & Electric (BGE), in coordination with Amtrak's Frederick Douglass Tunnel Initiative, is undertaking infrastructure work in central Baltimore related to the relocation of existing 115kV transmission facilities currently located within Amtrak's Center Tunnel. This project represents a major transportation investment to improve rail safety, capacity, and regional mobility along the Northeast Corridor. To enable this work, BGE proposes relocating existing transmission infrastructure into a new overhead configuration, with transmission structures sited through portions of South Remington and adjacent Baltimore City corridors.

The proposed project includes replacing existing underground circuits with new overhead transmission towers and electrical infrastructure in and around South Remington. BGE states that this relocation is necessary to maintain electric grid reliability for tens of thousands of customers across Baltimore City, including critical facilities such as hospitals, schools, and public services. The company states that installing overhead lines best considers system reliability, constructability, environmental impact, cost, and alignment with Amtrak's construction schedule.

The South Remington Community is concerned that residents and neighboring communities were not meaningfully engaged before BGE identified the overhead route as its preferred alternative. BGE submitted a request for a discretionary CPCN waiver in November 2024 and identified multiple routing alternatives, but did not provide residents with a timely opportunity to review, evaluate, or provide input on those alternatives. BGE informed the Public Service Commission that 1200 letters were mailed notifying residents of the proposed changes, but many residents and businesses report receiving no letter, and the letter provided as evidence from BGE did not mention overhead transmission lines.

The community believes a project of this scale requires a transparent evaluation process that considers not only engineering feasibility but also long-term neighborhood, economic, and community impacts. The project will result in temporary and permanent impacts to surrounding communities, including temporary construction disruption such as noise, traffic, and environmental disturbance as well as long-term changes caused by the overhead transmission towers, including impacts to neighborhood character, economic vitality, and long-term community stability. Although the Maryland Public Service Commission approved BGE's discretionary waiver request in December 2024, the South Remington Community believes BGE should conduct additional analysis of alternative routes before proceeding with permanent infrastructure changes that will affect Central Baltimore for generations.

II. Purpose and Requested Action

This document outlines the South Remington Community's concerns regarding BGE's proposed transmission line relocation and the reasons for those concerns. Its purpose is to inform residents and businesses about the project and encourage supporting efforts to ensure a transparent review of project alternatives. Residents and businesses are asked to offer support by signing the community petition, endorsing this position paper, and advocating on the community's behalf.

III. South Remington Community Context

South Remington is a diverse, historically working-class community situated in the lower portion of the Remington neighborhood. It is located south of the CSX rail corridor between West 21st and 24th Streets; Howard Street is to the east and Sisson Street to the west. The neighborhood is home to approximately 110 owner- and renter-occupied homes and a diverse collection of locally owned businesses, including the James Beard Award finalist restaurant Clavel, martial arts studio Guardian Baltimore, recording studio Wright Way Studio, construction business R. E. Harrington, and others. Its prominent visual landmark is the historic "Icehouse" warehouse, the first home of the American Ice Company.

South Remington has a long history as a close-knit residential community shaped by generations of Baltimore families, workers, and small businesses. Early residents included immigrant families from Sicily who worked in the local granite industry. Some founded the respected Ibello & Co. Upholsterers on Fawcett Street, and descendants of those families continue to reside in their family homes. Developed alongside the industrial and transportation infrastructure of the Jones Falls corridor, the neighborhood has evolved over time while maintaining its traditional rowhome character and strong sense of place.

In recent years, South Remington has experienced limited but ongoing residential and commercial reinvestment while retaining its established residential character. Despite this reinvestment, South Remington has continued to face significant infrastructure-related challenges. The demolition of the Sisson Street Bridge and the absence of a replacement have isolated the neighborhood from the broader Remington community and impeded access to I-83 for seven years. In addition, the inclusion of BGE's Center Substation within South Remington has resulted in recurring unplanned power and water outages. The neighborhood has also experienced long-standing deficiencies in public infrastructure, including deteriorated sidewalks, streets, and playground facilities that have remained unrepaired despite repeated requests from residents. These longstanding challenges have contributed to a perception among residents that South Remington has borne the impacts of projects serving the broader region while receiving comparatively little public investment. The proximity to industrial uses and their negative externalities is a major factor in limited reinvestment, holding South Remington back from the renaissance occurring in the rest of the neighborhood.

IV. Community Position:

South Remington has long coexisted with major transportation and utility infrastructure while continuing to support neighborhood revitalization. Residents are not opposed to infrastructure investment. They recognize the importance of maintaining a safe and reliable electric transmission system and understand that relocation of the HPFF transmission line is necessary to support the Amtrak tunnel project. However, they believe South Remington deserves meaningful consideration as additional permanent infrastructure is planned.

The community's position is that infrastructure serving the broader public should be planned in a manner that minimizes long-term harm to the neighborhoods asked to host it and should only be selected after a transparent evaluation of reasonable alternatives. Residents remain concerned about the planning process, the level of transparency and community engagement, and the extent to which neighborhood-level impacts were considered in selecting the proposed overhead route.

South Remington occupies a strategic location within Central Baltimore, connecting the ongoing revitalization of Greater Remington with future investment opportunities around Station North, Penn Station, and the Jones Falls corridor. Preserving the neighborhood's ability to attract future residents, businesses, and investment benefits not only South Remington but the broader Central Baltimore corridor. Decisions that diminish the neighborhood's long-term viability have implications beyond the immediate project area.

The South Remington Community believes the proposed overhead route places significant long-term economic and quality-of-life burdens on South Remington while providing regional

benefits to the broader electric system. These concerns will continue to inform the community's position as the project advances.

V. Impact of Project on Community:

Public Process: Residents did not receive notice to inform them of the project within the timeframe for community feedback. BGE originally presented six routing alternatives. Alternative routes were eliminated without timely explanation to affected communities. Residents were not provided sufficient opportunity to review or discuss the alternatives. Residents believe the public outreach process has lacked transparency.

Economic/Community Impact: In 2023-2024, GRIA provided extensive input for "Our Baltimore," the city's new Comprehensive Master Plan, to ensure future zoning in South Remington would strongly position it for deindustrialized mixed-use growth. Based on an analysis of the Comprehensive Plan's proposed zoning, the maximum permitted density of the parcels immediately surrounding the proposed transmission work yields a redevelopment potential well exceeding \$200 million, using a conservative estimate of \$150/square foot.

High voltage transmission lines have been associated with reduced property values, particularly for communities immediately adjacent or within views of the lines. Residents are concerned about impacts to homeowners, businesses, neighborhood investment, and Baltimore City's tax base. The overhead route reduces BGE's construction costs, but will likely shift long-term economic impacts onto residents and local government.

Neighborhood Character and Quality of Life: Transmission structures would permanently alter neighborhood character and discourage future residential investment. Taller towers would create greater visual impacts, while shorter towers would require more extensive tree clearing. Residents also have concerns about long-term quality-of-life impacts, including visual impacts, construction-related disruption, potential noise, and perceptions regarding electromagnetic fields. Public health recognizes that neighborhood environments and meaningful community engagement can influence individual and community well-being. While existing scientific evidence has not established that living near transmission lines directly causes adverse health effects, residents are concerned that limited public involvement has increased stress and undermined trust in the decision-making process.

VI. Evaluation of BGE's Proposed Alternative 4, "Overhead Crossing"

Residents believe BGE's evaluation focuses primarily on construction feasibility and initial project costs, while giving insufficient weight to the long-term economic and community costs borne by Baltimore residents. On November 7, 2024, BGE filed a request with Baltimore City for a discretionary CPCN requirement waiver. Appendix B of the filing presented six routing alternatives. At the time of filing BGE had already designated Alternative 4 "Overhead Crossing" as their preferred option. This decision was made without any opportunity for comment, public or municipal, on the negative effects this option will have for the current residents of South Remington as well as any future commercial development in the area.

Residents believe the indirect costs of overhead lines have not been adequately evaluated. Although the overhead option may reduce initial construction costs compared to the underground alternative, it may create long-term costs that have not been sufficiently analyzed, including:

- Long-term maintenance costs
- Reduced property values
- Neighborhood disinvestment
- Weakened business activity
- Reduced tax revenues
- Diminished attractiveness for future residents.

VII. Requested Action: BGE to Reconsider Alternative 3, CSX Bridge Crossing

BGE argues that relocation of the HPFF circuits is necessary to maintain electric reliability and redundancy for a large portion of the Baltimore region. Residents do not dispute the need for reliable electric service. However, the community believes:

- Community notification was inadequate;
- Alternatives were not fully evaluated publicly;
- Affected property owners have not been offered mitigation or compensation;
- Reliability objectives should be balanced with long-term community impacts.

Accordingly, the South Remington Community requests that BGE reconsider Alternative 3, "CSX Bridge Crossing," as the solution that would have the least detrimental impact on the community and Central Baltimore. Alternative 3 ("CSX Bridge Crossing") would route the new transmission infrastructure through the existing CSX rail corridor, crossing the Jones Falls

on/near the existing CSX bridge infrastructure rather than constructing new overhead transmission structures through South Remington.

In their summary, BGE concluded that this option was “too risky” without any further explanation. The South Remington Community believes that the current conditions of the CSX corridor warrant renewed evaluation before dismissing this alternative.

Since BGE completed its evaluation, conditions within the CSX corridor have changed. In early 2025, after the BGE filing, CSX decommissioned one of the rail lines on the proposed bridge, leaving only one of the four original tracks still in use. This change improves the feasibility of Alternative 3 and warrants renewed evaluation. The South Remington Community is requesting that, as part of their due diligence, BGE provide a new analysis on Alternative 3 that takes into account the current state of the CSX bridge, includes a financial comparison to Alternative 4 that factors in long-term maintenance costs, and provides a more in-depth analysis of why Alternative 3 would not be feasible.

Should a different alternative of the electrical towers project proceed, it is both reasonable and appropriate for Baltimore Gas & Electric to make a lasting investment in the community that will host this permanent infrastructure, commensurate with the loss of property value and economic impact.

The South Remington Community respectfully requests that BGE:

1. Conduct a renewed feasibility analysis of Alternative 3 using current CSX bridge conditions;
2. Provide a transparent comparison of Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 that includes long-term maintenance, economic, and community impacts;
3. Engage directly with affected residents and stakeholders before finalizing the project route.

VIII. Conclusion:

Residents recognize that the project may improve regional electric reliability and support future infrastructure needs. However, BGE and Baltimore City must ensure that the final project decision reflects not only engineering considerations but also long-term impacts on neighborhoods, homeowners, businesses, and municipal economic development. The South Remington Community believes that responsible infrastructure planning and strong neighborhoods are not competing priorities; they are mutually dependent. BGE has an opportunity to demonstrate that infrastructure modernization and community stewardship can advance together.

The South Remington Community respectfully requests that BGE pause advancement of the overhead route, conduct a renewed feasibility analysis of Alternative 3 based on current CSX bridge conditions, and provide a transparent comparison of alternatives that accounts for long-term community and economic impacts. If the overhead route proceeds, BGE should make a substantial and lasting investment in South Remington to mitigate the permanent impacts of hosting this infrastructure.