

Advocating for Undergrounding Utilities: The Time is NOW!

PRESENT DAY



FUTURE VISION



Introduction:

1. Contact your Supervisor at ClerktotheBOS@fairfaxcounty.gov to show your support by July 25.
2. Thank Supervisor, staff or other leader for their time.
3. State your name, community you live in & why this is important to you.

Things to Remember:

1. Always be professional and positive.
2. Share a personal story about why it matters.
3. Stick to the facts & keep it brief.

Key Points:

1. The County needs to **establish a revolving fund** to underground utilities on **all major roadway or revitalization projects**. We have a plan that can work.
2. **Funding options are available** to get this started through development proffers, County budget allocation, year-end funds and/or monthly electric utility fee.
3. Need to act now for undergrounding as part of **Richmond Highway's revitalization** to support a modern future and the \$1B in transportation investments.
4. County benefits through proven **higher property valuations** (tax revenues), proffer payments, increased desirability and greater utility reliability.
5. **If not now for this revitalization area, then when?** Ever? Lowest costs are now.
6. **Do you support setting-up:**
 - a) A revolving utilities undergrounding fund or reserve? Y or N
 - b) An electric utility fee to support the fund's needed initial bonding? Y or N
 - c) Richmond Highway as the first project with follow-on projects in other key County redevelopment areas? Y or N
7. **If Yes** to any, please share your comments at ClerktotheBOS@fairfaxcounty.gov.
If No, please share your comments to help us understand your concerns at MtVernon@fairfaxcounty.gov.

- Arlington, Alexandria, Prince William and the District of Columbia are doing it, but with this revolving fund Fairfax County does it better.
- Economic Development Authority (EDA) research identifies much higher property valuations.
- The Richmond Highway community is willing to accept the 1-2 year delay to get this right.
- Additional costs are small compared to doing this in the future.
- Provides opportunities for revitalizing areas to lead on a County initiative that creates greater valuations and equity in broader sections of the County.
- It just looks better 😊.

Undergrounding Utilities Plan for Fairfax County

The future is clear, utilities (electric, fiber, cable, phone) will be undergrounded for our security, reliability, resilience, revitalization, property values and aesthetics, much like we have been requiring for new developments and in our comprehensive plans for years. It is not an “if”, but a how and when. Over the past several years as we have observed our neighboring jurisdictions make those commitments, we have been working to do what Fairfax County does best, create a systems approach for achieving a vision through a well-planned, step by step regularized process. The information below presents a summary of the system that the Board of Supervisors should adopt, costing less than \$5M/year, to now begin this decades long process of undergrounding utilities along our major roadways, revitalization areas and distribution lines.

Fairfax County Needs it, Communities/Business Groups Support It

The future requires it as our population density, super storms’ frequency and severity and our dependency on internet and energy connections increases. Sound infrastructure and business practices mean that we plan for undergrounding all roadway or area revitalizations, reconfigurations and/or widenings. Why can’t the County afford to underground utilities in key commercial and high-density residential areas? Richmond Highway could be undergrounded for less than \$5M per year, with ultimately the owners along the highway paying for this investment. Other County areas have similar opportunities, providing a unique opportunity for these areas to lead on a County initiative, bringing greater equity and fulfilling a key commitment to One Fairfax. The Fairfax County Council of Civic Associations, Mount Vernon Council of Civic Associations, other area civic associations, Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce, Southeast Fairfax Development Corporation, Environmental Quality Advisory Council, the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority and many other area organizations support the benefits of utility undergrounding.

Establish a Funding Process

For the FY 2016 budget, the Board established an Economic Opportunity Reserve (EOR) to provide for strategic investment opportunities identified by the Board. A similar process would be used to establish a Reliable Utilities/Undergrounding Reserve or Fund (RUR) to provide for the strategic investment of funds for increasing utility reliability through undergrounding. The sources of funding could include redevelopment proffers from properties benefiting from the improvements, County budget allocations, year-end funds and/or a County-wide commercial and/or residential meter fee collected on behalf of the County by the electric utility. As with other non-recurring investments, funds could be requested similar to how EOR fund requests.

Potential Future Projects

Beyond the utility fee legislative requirement for Richmond Highway to be the initial project, RUR funds could be used for any road related project that reduces congestion or improves mobility, transit system infrastructure, safety, or service or access to such project. Projects like Central Annandale, McLean, Reston or Tysons Business Districts, as well as projects along Route 7, Route 28, Route 50, Columbia Pike or Braddock Road are also opportunities. The key to realizing these opportunities is having a fund ready when these projects are.

Richmond Highway Pilot Program

The best time to underground utilities is when utilities are already being relocated, which applies to the seven miles of Richmond Highway being revitalized over the next eight years using over \$1B of local, state and federal funds. The net additional cost for undergrounding is expected to be about \$100M, but two or three times that if done later. It is critical to make the decision to proceed now in order to minimize further the anticipated 1-2 years additional time that would be added to the project completion date, currently 2030. Thank you for your support of this important initiative. You can see from the images the powerful visual impact that undergrounding utilities has for seeing a community as one of the Past or Future-- the 21st Century+ Future!