

# Reimagining Highways as Infrastructure Corridors To Meet Society's Needs

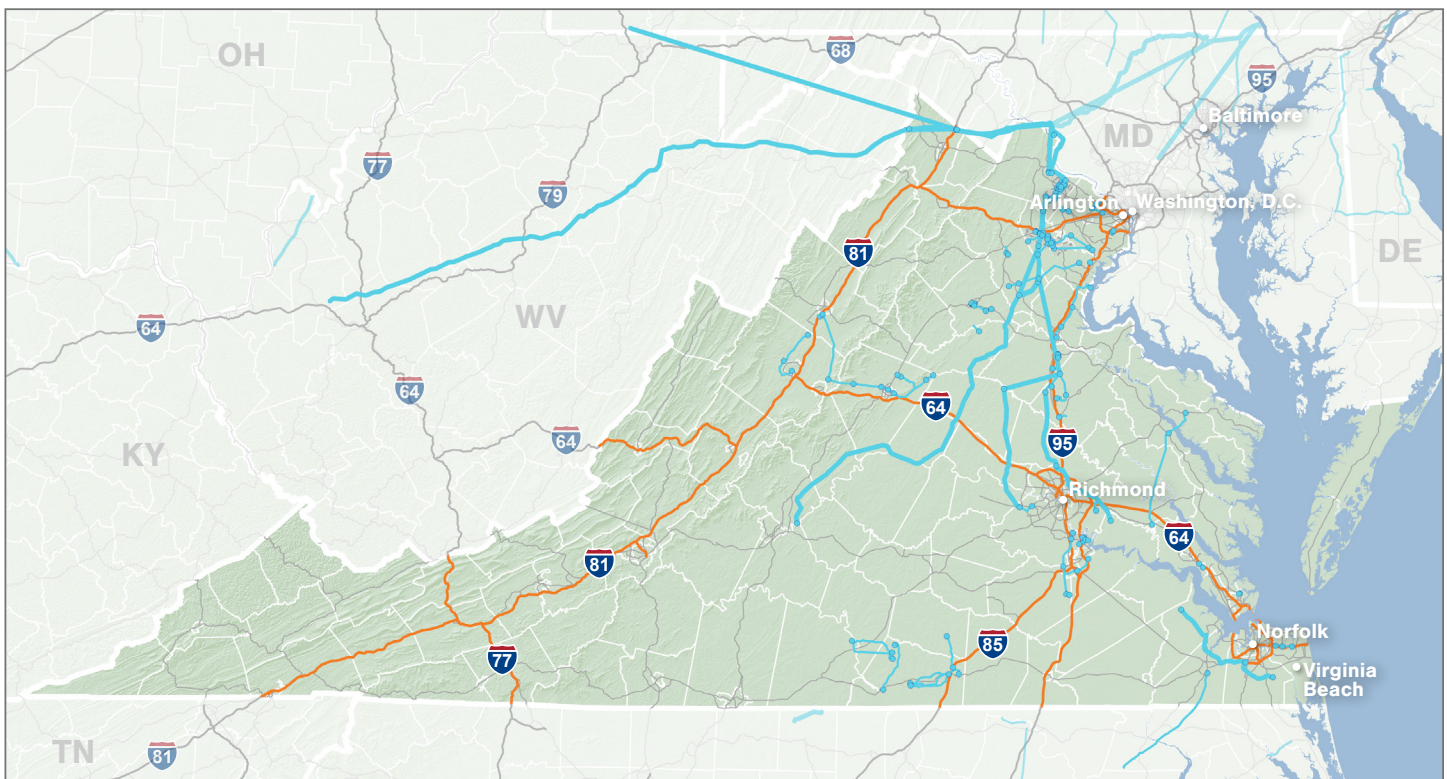
Virginia is home to the largest data center market in the world, hosting hundreds of facilities, including 150 of the largest “hyperscale” data centers. And the Commonwealth’s largest utility is moving quickly to bring 2.6 GW in new offshore wind capacity online beginning in spring 2026.

To meet Virginians’ current and future needs and maintain a reliable and affordable electric system, transmission providers are also planning several projects across the Commonwealth. To speed up the permitting process and minimize the need to build on undisturbed and private land, state agencies and policy makers can allow and encourage the siting of electric transmission in interstate highway rights-of-way (ROW) and other existing corridors.

## Current Policy Landscape

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Utility Manual of Instructions (Section 8.3.3, Subsection G) prohibits overhead transmission lines from being installed longitudinally in the ROW of any controlled access highway. The map below highlights planned transmission and highway corridors where co-location is currently prohibited.

Planned Transmission Projects in Virginia



**Federal & state highways**

- Co-located transmission siting **rarely or not allowed**
- Co-located transmission siting **allowed**

**Planned transmission projects**

- Substations
- Transmission lines by voltage
  - ≤ 230 kV
  - 231 kV to 345 kV
  - 346 kV to 745 kV

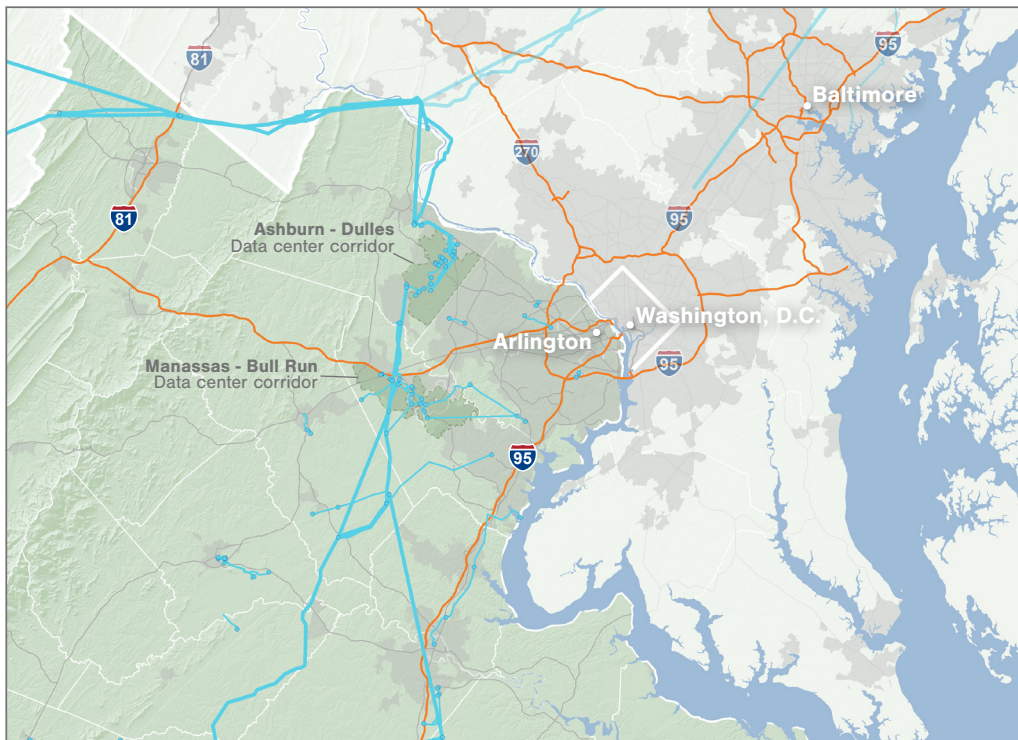
Figure authored by Horizon Climate Group (2025) in association with NextGen Highways.

## Opportunities

Some of the transmission projects in the planning stages in Virginia are part of a regional joint venture approved by grid operator PJM to reinforce grid reliability in the Commonwealth and neighboring Maryland and West Virginia. The map below highlights how planned transmission will connect to Northern Virginia's data center corridors, also ensuring a more reliable and affordable grid for residents and businesses in the surrounding communities.

By lifting the prohibition on co-location of transmission in interstate highway rights-of-way, Virginia could help these projects avoid costly litigation, slower permitting, and community opposition, while creating shovel-ready utility jobs.

### Planned Transmission Projects in Northern Virginia & D.C. Metro



#### Federal & state highways

- Co-located transmission siting **rarely or not allowed**
- Co-located transmission siting **allowed**

#### Planned transmission projects

- Substations

#### Transmission lines by voltage

- ≤ 230 kV
- 231 kV to 345 kV
- 346 kV to 745 kV

- Data center corridors
- Urban areas

Figure authored by Horizon Climate Group (2025) in association with NextGen Highways.

## Our Work

NextGen Highways is exploring legislative and policy routes to easing restrictions on highway co-location. These include support for House Bill 889, currently under consideration in the 2026 legislative session, which would require transmission siting to prioritize highway corridors over new corridors and create a state work group to study opportunities to use highway rights-of-way for transmission. To further these efforts, we have recruited a diverse coalition representing energy, environment, and municipal interests, including the organizations listed below:

- Apex Clean Energy
- Clean Air Task Force
- Clean Virginia
- Conservatives for Clean Energy
- Greater Washington Region Clean Cities Coalition
- Southern Environmental Law Center
- Virginia Clean Cities