

BUSINESS

Maryland power plant wants to close. It can't until BGE power lines are approved.

Project that would replace lost electricity flow is opposed by some lawmakers, residents



Zachary Mitchell, director of economic development and large projects for BGE, discusses new projects near the BGE Bagley substation in Fallston on Wednesday. (Brian Krista/Staff)



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The closure of Maryland's last coal-fired power plant could be delayed by an additional two years, as Baltimore Gas & Electric awaits state approval for a project replacing the electricity flow going offline. The major construction project, which **faces opposition** from some residents and lawmakers, would span three counties and bring additional power lines and substations to the region.

Talen Energy originally planned to close its Brandon Shores coal power plant and H.A. Wagner oil-fueled power plant in Pasadena in 2025. Grid operator PJM determined that the plants must remain active until a plan to replace the energy supply is complete, and it directed BGE to develop a solution.

In the project that spans Harford, Baltimore and Anne Arundel counties, BGE plans to build new and upgrade existing infrastructure to import energy from Pennsylvania, some of which comes

from a nuclear plant. The plan would greatly increase the amount of energy Maryland imports from out of state.

“It’s not discretionary, PJM identified the need, they directed the work to us, and it’s our job to make sure it happens,” BGE Senior Communications Director Nicholas Alexopoulos said. “So that when you go to flip on your lights, to turn on your TV, your air conditioning, that happens. This project is absolutely vital in that effort.”

The current agreement to keep the power plants running is set to expire in May 2029, but Talen and the grid operator have asked the federal government for an extension through May 2031.

BGE applied for the required Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity with the Maryland Public Service Commission in 2024. While a utility judge issued a proposed order in favor of the certificate in March, the utility company is awaiting a final decision from the Maryland Public Service Commission before it can pursue local building permits and construction.

To get the certificate, BGE has to overcome **appeals** from residents and lawmakers against the project, concerned that the additional electrical infrastructure could negatively impact the region.

The project

The Brandon Shores Retirement Mitigation Project aims to bring energy from a substation near the Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station in Delta, Pennsylvania, into Maryland. From the substation to the Maryland border, PECO, a Pennsylvania-based public utility company, will handle the project.

From the state border to the existing Graceton substation in Harford County, the project calls for demolishing one existing circuit transmission line and replacing it with a circuit with more capacity.

Then, from the Graceton substation to a new substation planned east of Rosedale in Baltimore County, BGE plans to build transmission lines, typically with taller towers, next to existing BGE wires.

From the new substation to an existing substation in Riverside, Baltimore County, BGE plans to remove wires from existing transmission towers, replacing the lines with new ones to handle the existing currents and the new energy brought in from Pennsylvania.

East of Glen Burnie in Anne Arundel County, BGE plans to build another new substation for this project. Three existing substations, one in Baltimore County and two in Harford County, will be expanded as a part of the project.

In a statement to The Baltimore Sun, PJM said the need for grid upgrades is “immediate in nature.”

Substations involved in planned BGE Brandon Shores Retirement Mitigation Project

Two new substations are planned for the project, Batavia and Solley Road. Three substations are set to be upgraded: Conastone, Graceton and Riverside.



Source: Baltimore Gas & Electric • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Along with producing energy, power plants regulate the flow of electricity through the grid. The substations will need to do more of this regulation when the plants go offline, rendering the substation improvements and additions needed to prevent blackouts, Alexopoulos said.

The work for this project will be on land BGE currently owns or has easement rights to, according to Zachary Mitchell, the company's director of economic development and large projects. For the power lines, construction will be either right next to or on existing lines and infrastructure.

"We're not changing the energy environment or ecosystem in these communities," Mitchell said.



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July 29, 2026: BGE transmission towers and wires near the Sollers Point Library in Dundalk on Wednesday. (Brian Krista/Staff)



Keeping power on

While the BGE project is underway, PJM has decided that the power plants in Maryland must stay on under reliability must-run agreements to keep enough electricity flowing into the state.

As part of the current agreement, BGE customers have to pay about \$15 million per month to Talen Energy, or about \$4 to \$5 per ratepayer. Talen Energy and PJM both confirmed to The Sun that they are awaiting approval from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to extend the agreement keeping the plants online.

“We are pleased to continue to provide the power necessary to maintain grid and transmission reliability in the region and are focused on operating reliably,” Talen Energy said in a statement to The Sun.

The project is slated to be completed by December 2028, but as the public utility continues to wait for approvals, the timeline and the premiums to keep the power plants running might need to be extended.

“The longer this delay continues, the company is at risk of not completing this project by December of 2028, which would continue adding the [reliability must run] to the customer’s

utility bill,” Mitchell said. “Every month that this project does not go in service supports Talen Energy receiving that \$15 million a month premium.”

The Maryland Public Service Commission told The Sun there is not a timeline for when it will make a decision on the project but said the commission is reviewing the case record.

Project impact, if completed

While **affordability** has dominated energy conversations in Maryland, this project is focused on getting enough power into the state after the plants shut down.

“The project we’re talking about today is a necessity for reliability,” Mitchell said. “This project keeps our lights on. Affordability is directly impacted by the amount of generation available to our customers, and at this time, Maryland residents, our customers, need ample supply of generation.”

Once the project is in service and the power plants go offline, ratepayers can expect to pay between \$2 to \$4 per month for the system upgrades throughout the useful life of the new utilities, according to senior project manager Jacob Burlin.

Maryland imports about 40% of its energy from out of state. If the power plants close and the mitigation project is completed, Maryland would import about 80% of its electricity, according to Alexopoulos.

Pushback

Several residents, state lawmakers and local officials have **pushed back** against the project, concerned about the health, environmental and lifestyle impacts the project could have on the region.

In public comments and in hearings, the sentiments were “overwhelmingly in opposition to the Project,” according to the Public Utility Law Judge Jennifer Grace’s March proposed order. Many speakers questioned the need for the new lines, expressed concern with greater electromagnetic field exposure and worried that the lines could visually impact their neighborhoods.

The judge concluded that the project “should not pose a health risk,” due to the greater exposure, and the Power Plant Research Program, a reviewing group from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, concurred.

Mark Kukucka lives near the proposed project in Baltimore County. He said residents and members of the group No More Power Lines are concerned that adding electrical wires near their homes will affect property values and health.

“We’re just tired of being trampled,” he told The Sun in an interview.

Other residents argued that BGE does not have easement rights to construct additional transmission lines because deeds from decades ago referenced authorizations for only one transmission line. The property rights, according to the judge’s proposed order, do not need to be decided in the decision by the Public Service Commission.

Several public officials, including Republican Harford County Executive Bob Cassilly, also wrote to the commission concerned about the impact that construction could have on traffic in the area.

Four state senators representing Harford and Baltimore counties wrote to the public service commission, urging against approving the project without addressing easement concerns. The lawmakers — Republicans J.B. Jennings, Chris West and Johnny Ray Salling and Democrat Mary Dulany-James — also said there should have been more community engagement.

“There is no question that grid reliability is important. However, reliability must not come at the expense of transparency, due process, and the property rights of Marylanders,” the senators wrote.

Have a news tip? Contact Katharine Wilson at kwilson@baltsun.com.