

SENATE No. 2155

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Susan L. Moran

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act analyzing the benefits of burying utility wires.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Susan L. Moran

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Plymouth and Barnstable

SENATE No. 2155

By Ms. Moran, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 2155) of Susan L. Moran for legislation to analyze the benefits of burying utility wires. Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
(2023-2024)**

An Act analyzing the benefits of burying utility wires.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. There shall be a commission to study the potential net benefits of
2 undergrounding utility wires in the commonwealth.

3 The commission shall be comprised of the following members: the secretary of energy
4 and environmental affairs or a designee, the secretary of administration and finance or a
5 designee, the secretary of housing and economic development or a designee, the secretary of
6 public safety and security or a designee, the director of the department of public utilities, the
7 director of the department of energy resources, a representative from Eversource, a
8 representative from National Grid, a representative from the Massachusetts Municipal
9 Association, a member appointed by the speaker of the house, and a member appointed by the
10 president of the senate.

11 The commission shall conduct a study that compares the total cost of undergrounding
12 utility lines in different regions within the commonwealth and statewide with the societal cost

13 due to natural disasters or potential loss of power that may occur due to taking no further action
14 to underground utility lines.

15 For the purposes of the study, the following words shall have the following definitions:

16 “Societal cost”, the total direct or indirect financial or abstract cost of a certain action or
17 lack thereof to a community, region, or state, including:

18 (a) loss of gross domestic product;

19 (b) loss of potential future gross domestic product due to decline in tourism or any other
20 cause;

21 (c) cost increases for utility customers;

22 (d) costs due to mandatory or encouraged utility rationing for utility customers;

23 (e) costs incurred from safety hazards or concerns;

24 (f) costs to property owners or renters, businesses, or any other persons or entities;

25 (g) costs incurred from inhibition of internet service; and

26 (h) any other costs which the commission identifies.

27 “Utility distribution lines”, any cables, poles, or other infrastructure used to distribute
28 electricity, internet service, cable service, or other utility service between a substation and any
29 residential properties.

30 “Utility transmission lines”, any cables, poles, or other infrastructure used to distribute
31 electricity, internet service, cable service, or other utility service between a generation plant and
32 a substation or substations.

33 The study shall analyze the following, and estimate only where the cost is unknown:

34 The cost of undergrounding all utility distribution lines within the commonwealth;

35 The cost of undergrounding all utility distribution lines within the following regions of
36 the commonwealth:

37 The South Shore;

38 Cape Cod;

39 Western Massachusetts; and

40 Any other region that the agencies conducting the study designate;

41 The cost of undergrounding all utility transmission lines within the commonwealth;

42 The cost of undergrounding all utility transmission lines within the following regions of
43 the commonwealth:

44 The South Shore;

45 Cape Cod;

46 Western Massachusetts; and

47 Any other region that the agencies conducting the study designate;

48 The potential safety concerns, and total future societal cost to the commonwealth and its
49 citizens and businesses, of taking no further action to underground any or all utility distribution
50 lines within the commonwealth;

51 The potential safety concerns, and total future societal cost to the commonwealth and its
52 citizens and businesses of taking no further action to underground any or all utility distribution
53 lines within the following regions of the commonwealth:

54 The South Shore;

55 Cape Cod;

56 Western Massachusetts; and

57 Any other region that the agencies conducting the study designate;

58 The potential safety concerns, and total future societal cost to the commonwealth and its
59 citizens and businesses of taking no further action to underground any and all utility transmission
60 lines within the commonwealth; and

61 The potential safety concerns, and total future societal cost to the commonwealth and its
62 citizens and businesses of taking no further action to underground any and all utility transmission
63 lines within the following regions of the commonwealth:

64 The South Shore;

65 Cape Cod;

66 Western Massachusetts; and

67 Any other region that the agencies conducting the study designate.

68 The study shall divide all costs analyzed in the study by responsibility, including, but not
69 limited to: state costs, municipal costs, and others. The study shall divide all costs analyzed in
70 the study into the total cost, and into cost time periods, based on when the cost will be realized
71 by the responsible entity. The time periods shall be 10, 25, and 50 years from the date of the
72 study's completion.

73 SECTION 2. Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the department
74 of public utilities shall promulgate regulations to require utility companies with utility
75 distribution or transmission lines in the commonwealth to establish a ranking system for their
76 utility lines that measures the prudence of undergrounding each utility line. The regulations shall
77 allow utility companies in the commonwealth to group utility lines together for the purpose of
78 ranking, provided, however, that the smallest designated group of utility lines shall not be larger
79 than the municipality in which the utility lines are located.