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SENATE BILL NO. 321

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 13, 2026

A BILL to amend and reenact § 33.2-909 of the Code of Virginia, relating to abandonment of highway; section of the secondary state highway system; local authority.

Patron—McPike

Referred to Committee on Transportation

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 33.2-909 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 33.2-909. Abandonment of highway, landing, or railroad crossing; procedure.

A. The governing body of any county on its own motion or upon petition of any interested landowner may cause any section of the secondary state highway system, or any crossing by the highway of the lines of a railroad company or crossing by the lines of a railroad company of the highway, deemed by it to be no longer necessary for the uses of the secondary state highway system to be abandoned altogether as a public highway, a public landing, or a public railroad crossing by complying substantially with the procedure provided in this section.

B. The governing body of the county shall give notice of its intention to abandon any such highway, landing, or railroad crossing (i) by posting a notice of such intention at least three days before the first day of a regular term of the circuit court at the front door of the courthouse of the county in which the section of the highway, landing, or railroad crossing sought to be abandoned as a public highway, public landing, or public railroad crossing is located or (ii) by posting notice in at least three places on and along the highway, landing, or railroad crossing sought to be abandoned for at least 30 days and in either case by publishing notice of its intention in two or more issues of a newspaper having general circulation in the county. In addition, the governing body of the county shall give notice of its intention to abandon such highway, landing, or railroad crossing to the Board or the Commissioner of Highways. In any case in which the highway, landing, or railroad crossing proposed to be abandoned lies in two or more counties, the governing bodies of such counties shall not abandon such highway, landing, or railroad crossing unless and until all affected governing bodies agree. The procedure in such cases shall conform mutatis mutandis to the procedure prescribed for the abandonment of a highway, landing, or railroad crossing located entirely within a county.

When the governing body of a county gives notice of intention to abandon a public landing, the governing body shall also give such notice to the Department of Wildlife Resources.

C. If one or more landowners in the county whose property abuts the highway, landing, or railroad crossing proposed to be abandoned, or if only a section of a highway, landing, or railroad crossing is proposed to be abandoned, whose property abuts such section, or the Board or the Department of Wildlife Resources, in the case of a public landing, files a petition with the governing body of the county within 30 days after notice is posted and published as provided in this section, the governing body of the county shall hold a public hearing on the proposed abandonment and shall give notice of the time and place of the hearing by publishing such information twice in a newspaper having general circulation in the county, with the first publication appearing no more than 28 days before and the second publication appearing no less than seven days before the hearing. The governing body shall also give notice to the Board or, if a public landing is sought to be abandoned, to the Department of Wildlife Resources.

D. If a petition for a public hearing is not filed as provided in this section, or if after a public hearing is held the governing body of the county is satisfied that no public necessity exists for the continuance of the section of the secondary highway as a public highway or the railroad crossing as a public railroad crossing or the landing as a public landing or that the safety and welfare of the public would be served best by abandoning the section of highway, the landing, or the railroad crossing as a public highway, public landing, or public railroad crossing, the governing body of the county shall (i) within four months of the 30-day period during which notice was posted where no petition for a public hearing was filed or (ii) within four months after the public hearing adopt an ordinance or resolution abandoning the section of highway as a public highway, or the landing as a public landing, or the railroad crossing as a public railroad crossing, and with that ordinance or resolution the section of highway shall cease to be a public highway, a public landing, or a public railroad crossing. If the governing body is not so satisfied, it shall dismiss the application within the applicable four months provided in this subsection.

E. A finding by the governing body of a county that a section of the secondary state highway system is no longer necessary for the uses of the secondary state highway system may be made if the following conditions exist:

- 59 1. ~~The highway is located within a residence district as defined in § 46.2-100;~~
- 60 ~~2. The residence district~~ *section of the secondary state highway system* is located within a county having a
- 61 density of population exceeding 1,000 per square mile;
- 62 ~~3.~~ 2. Continued operation of the section of highway in question constitutes a threat to the public safety and
- 63 welfare; and
- 64 ~~4.~~ 3. Alternate routes for use after abandonment of the highway are readily available.
- 65 F. In considering the abandonment of any section of highway under the provisions of this section, due
- 66 consideration shall be given to the historic value, if any, of such highway.
- 67 G. Any ordinance or resolution of abandonment issued in compliance with this section shall give rise in
- 68 subsequent proceedings, if any, to a presumption of adequate justification for the abandonment.
- 69 H. No public landing shall be abandoned unless the Board of Wildlife Resources shall by resolution
- 70 concur in such abandonment.