



THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS DIVISION (GISD)



Tregenza A. Roach
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE
CHAIRMAN, V.I. BANKING BOARD

Wednesday, September 10, 2025

RE: Bill No. 36-0110, “*An Act amending title 20 Virgin Islands Code, part I, chapter 1 to require a permit from the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works before the excavation of any public roadway.*”

Good Morning Senator Marise C. James. Esq., Chair of the Committee on Disaster Recovery, Infrastructure & Planning, esteemed Senators of the 36th Legislature of the Virgin Islands, Commissioners & Executives present, the viewing and listening audience. My name is L. Christopher George. I am Administrator of the Territory’s Geospatial Information Systems Division; otherwise known as the GIS Division, of the Office of the Lieutenant Governor Tregenza A. Roach Esq. With me today in attendance is GIS Analyst, Mr. Pedro Nieves. It is an honor to provide testimony regarding Bill No. 36-0110, “An Act amending title 20 Virgin Islands Code, part 1, chapter 1 to require a permit from the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works (DPW) before the excavation of any public roadway” as proposed by Senator Angel Bolques Jr. As the Lieutenant Governor is steward of the U.S. Virgin Islands’ Land Administration, under which the responsibility of the GIS Division is prescribed per V.I.Code Title 1 Chapter 5 Section 91, and under such precedence we shall to provide testimony and guidance today regarding aforesaid mentioned Bill.

Simply put. This opportunity to allow DPW to further specify rules and regulations for Virgin Islands road construction should be taken and the Office of the Lt Governor (OLG) stands in full support of Bill 36-0110. Alternatively for Office of the Lt Governor, with the granting of more specified rules and regulations we should recognize the advent of the need for *specified definitions* and *modes of execution* emanating from the permitting process.

Regarding: “SPECIFIED DEFINITIONS”

For the GIS Division, Cadastral, OLG Legal Counsel and DPW Legal Counsel, the term “any public roadway” has proven historically problematic. Other than the limited number of road specific legislation made by this body over the years or by default the Federal Highway Routes, the Territory does NOT have a clear definition that denotes public versus private roads. This is an example of how loose terminology over time and past “kick-the-can-down-the-road” attitudes affect the good intent of the present. The GIS Division recommends in very short term fashion that the actual definitions of what are public or private roads be put in their place. The legal battles that have sprung from this very specific situation are too numerous to mention and as yet we as a Government have not dealt with it. The GIS Division can assist in providing methodology in solving this matter.



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Regarding: “MODES OF EXECUTION”

Upon enactment of this amendment to Title 20, this body should immediately recognize that issuance of a road construction permit is actually STEP 1 of the Call Before you Dig Legislation (Act 7798). The Call Before You Dig legislation provides the much-needed legislative backbone to why data sharing is important to critical infrastructure development and maintenance. However, please note at this point that a comprehensive, accurate catalogue of all underground utilities in the Virgin Islands does not currently exist. To achieve optimal operational efficiency of critical infrastructure construction that need must be fulfilled. DPW has made significant progress in the data requirements for preliminary schematics as well as final as-built from their contractors, which they in turn pass on to the Territorial GIS Platform for sharing amongst our other Infrastructure partners. As of 2025, we are thankful that we are realizing the necessary contractual partnerships with infrastructure agencies such as DPW, VI Water & Power Authority, Office of Disaster and Recovery, ONE Communication, and Liberty Broadband. Though the GIS division has made much progress in critical infrastructure data sharing there are issues in data development and accuracy standards that prevent us from attaining comprehensive data capacity. Identification and location of existing underground assets is often accomplished through the extensive firsthand knowledge of field personnel and proprietary schematics that are not related to other utilities in the project site. This, as one can deduce, leads to a multitude of issues including unnecessary trenching in Virgin Islands roadways and unintended damage to existing underground infrastructure. In the short term there are various preliminary steps that can be taken to achieve a mode of efficiency for USVI Road data quality until such time a comprehensive data catalogue of critical infrastructure is created.

In conclusion, more specific language regarding the details of a road construction permit from DPW is a necessary step forward. Upon enactment and once in utilization, a road construction permit should most importantly be perceived as the first trigger in adhering to the “Call before You Dig” legislated protocol. Discussion regarding this process and the resources needed by DPW to fulfill this process should be considered next for this body.

It is the opinion of the GIS Division that Bill No. 36-0110, “*An Act amending title 20 Virgin Islands Code, part I, chapter 1 to require a permit from the Virgin Islands Department of Public Works before the excavation of any public roadway*” be moved forward to the Committee of Rules and Judiciary for further deliberation. I am available for further questions and discussion.