

When a multi-billion-dollar corporation asks a county to "close a road," they are intentionally minimizing the reality of what that means. To a civil engineer or a utility lawyer, a public right-of-way is not just a strip of asphalt—it is a protected, subterranean and aerial utility corridor. If Knox County vacates Graybeal Road and allows Vulcan to turn that acreage into an 80-foot-deep blast pit, the physical ground holding the area's infrastructure will literally be blown up. Everything beneath it and above it must be relocated.

1. The Ratepayer Subsidy Argument (Who Pays?)

Utility relocation is astronomically expensive. Moving high-voltage power lines, tearing up alternate roads to lay new water mains, and splicing municipal fiber optics costs millions of dollars per mile. In Tennessee, utility providers like the West Knox Utility District (WKUD) or Lenoir City Utilities Board (LCUB) operate on strict budgets funded by residents' monthly bills. If Knox County vacates the road and forces the utilities to move their infrastructure, the utility district often has to foot the bill.

Commissioners, if West Knox Utility District has to spend \$2 million to reroute the water mains currently sitting under Graybeal Road, they will recover that cost by raising the water rates on every single family in Hardin Valley. Unless Vulcan Materials is writing a blank check to cover 100% of the relocation costs, you are forcing local taxpayers to subsidize a multi-million-dollar infrastructure project just so a private corporation can mine more rock. That is a corporate bailout paid for by our water bills.

2. The Destruction of Public Easements

Public utilities have an automatic right to exist within the public road right-of-way. When the road is closed and the land reverts to private ownership (Vulcan), those utility easements are destroyed. To move the utilities, the utility districts cannot simply place them wherever they want. They will be forced to acquire new easements. This means WKUD or LCUB will have to legally seize strips of land from other private property owners in Hardin Valley—potentially through eminent domain—just to lay the new pipes and wires.

When you close this road, where exactly are the water mains and power lines going? Have you secured the new easements? Are you going to allow the utility district to use eminent domain to seize land from the residents just to run the utilities that Vulcan forced out of the public right-of-way?

3. The Threat of Service Interruptions (Boil Water & Blackouts)

You cannot seamlessly move a major utility line. The process involves laying the new line, shutting down the grid, physically splicing the connections, and then turning it back on. Hardin Valley's infrastructure is already strained under the weight of the massive residential development the county has approved.

Tearing up the utility grid introduces the massive risk of depressurizing water lines (which triggers mandatory, community-wide boil-water advisories) or causing extended power and internet outages for families who work from home. Are you prepared to issue boil-water advisories for the 95 homes you just approved next door while the utility lines are severed and rerouted? What is the county's liability if a contractor strikes a high-pressure line during this unplanned, corporate-mandated relocation?

Utility companies do not want to spend the money or do the work to move these lines, We demand an "Indemnification and Relocation Bond"

Knox County cannot vote to close Graybeal Road until Vulcan Materials provides an unconditional indemnification agreement and a fully funded surety bond (estimated by the utility districts, not Vulcan) to cover 100% of the engineering, legal, and physical costs of relocating every utility currently residing in the right-of-way.

We would like time to get information about the costs from the different Utility General Managers, so we have accurate data on the cost of moving utilities.

We formally request that the General Managers or Chief Engineers of the West Knox Utility District (water/wastewater) KUB (gas) and LCUB (electric) appear before the commission. We want them on the public record answering two questions:

"Exactly what infrastructure currently exists in the Graybeal Road right-of-way?"

"How much will it cost to move it, and who is paying for it?"

3. We demand the "Utility Relocation Master Plan"

We argue that the application is "incomplete" and therefore legally cannot be voted on. Knox County Code requires a comprehensive review of infrastructure impacts. If Vulcan and the Knox County Engineering Department have not produced a fully engineered, fully funded Utility Relocation Master Plan showing exactly where the new lines will go and how they will be paid for, the Commission has no legal standing to approve the road closure. If this expansion is approved the commissioners might be inadvertently raising their constituents' water bills to pay for a corporate expansion.