RIDERSHIP ON THE RISE

VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS
A better way. A better life.
www.vre.org
There’s a place where the love of country runs as deep as the love of family. It’s just 30 miles from DC along the Potomac River. Come discover award-winning homes, exciting family-friendly amenities, and the genuine, heartfelt sense of community that colors every aspect of Potomac Shores.

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On-Site Elementary School (2017)
Future On-Site VRE Train Station
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Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course & Clubhouse
30 Miles from DC with Two Miles of Shoreline

Homes from the $300s to $900s

Features and products vary by community. Price, offers, financing and availability are subject to change without notice.
Dear Riders,

At VRE, we realize that you have many commuting options in Northern Virginia, and we are grateful you choose to ride our service. As we will explore in this issue of RIDE Magazine, I am pleased to report that our ridership numbers have been at historic highs in 2017! During each of the first four full work weeks, we exceeded 100,000 riders; a significant milestone for our service.

VRE is a critical part of a complex transportation network whose shared goal is to get people to their destinations in a safe, comfortable and reliable manner. As such, we are pleased to provide a dependable commuting alternative during the latest SafeTrack surges. We welcome riders that typically use Metro as the Washington Metro Transit Authority (WMATA) works diligently to update and repair their infrastructure. We understand that like VRE, our colleagues at WMATA place the highest priority on safety, and while they work to restore their system to a state-of-good-repair, we are glad to have new riders on VRE.

I would also like to thank our regular riders who have welcomed new VRE customers. As the number of riders continues to climb, we are also working to ensure everyone has as comfortable a ride as possible. Our system is designed to handle the influx of new riders, however I am sure many of you are quite aware the sometimes-heavy volume we’re experiencing leaves some riders standing on the trains for a couple of stops. We encourage everyone to continue to be courteous to fellow passengers ensuring everyone can exit trains at their destination. We rely on our riders, both new and veteran, to help us keep our trains a relaxed environment as the working day begins and ends.

We also take pride in our ability to provide reliable, on-time service. While our over-all track record has been solid, we also understand there have been a few rough commuting days over the past few weeks due to some mechanical issues with our equipment. I apologize for the inconvenience this has caused our riders, and be assured we have been working around the clock to resolve these issues. We thank you for choosing VRE for your commute, and we look forward to continuing to provide a proven, valued service.

Sincerely,

DOUG ALLEN
Chief Executive Officer
Virginia Railway Express
VRE MEETS WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS TO DISCUSS NEW YARD AT IVY CITY

On February 16, 2017, Virginia Railway Express held its first public meeting for the proposed VRE Midday Storage Facility project. The proposed location is adjacent to the Ivy City neighborhood of the District of Columbia. The Midday Storage Facility project will provide a location for storing VRE trains between morning and evening service. Currently, VRE leases storage space for this purpose from Amtrak in the Ivy City Coach Yard. Amtrak needs that space for future high speed train equipment, meaning VRE needs to relocate its train storage facility. After considering 20 potential storage sites around the region, VRE determined the property owned by Amtrak along New York Avenue NE was the preferred location for midday storage.

The adjacent Ivy City neighborhood on the opposite side of New York Avenue NE is experiencing rapid redevelopment and reinvestment, and VRE has committed to working with the community and other stakeholders in the District to apply the best practices in urban design to enhance the quality and appearance of the existing and expanded rail facilities there. VRE will not perform maintenance or refuel its trains in the new facility and wayside power hook-ups will be provided so locomotives will not need to idle during layover.

At the meeting, VRE provided an overview of the project, described the project development process, and listened to feedback from the community. Meeting attendees asked about how the project could be incorporated into the revitalization of New York Avenue NE as a gateway to the District. The community provided suggestions for ways the project could provide a positive benefit to the community or lessen its potential visual impact, such as incorporating a multi-use trail, creating public open space, or lowering the level of the tracks to make them more concealed. The project team is exploring these options as well as the potential for using the air rights over the Amtrak property for a commercial overbuild or a possible infill commuter rail station for Ivy City.

VRE will continue to work with members of the community, elected officials in the District, stakeholders, and property owners to assess potential impacts and determine ways VRE can be a good neighbor and design the new Midday Storage Facility to help meet the needs of the community.

All the materials from the public meeting are posted on the VRE website: www.vre.org/development/midday-storage-facility.
The Virginia General Assembly wrapped up its annual legislative session on Saturday, February 25. Among its accomplishments was passage of legislation to create the “Metro Safety Commission.” This important legislation was a necessary step in meeting a federal requirement for Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia to establish an independent safety oversight body for the Washington Area Transit Authority (WMATA). As required by Federal law, on February 10, 2017, the Federal Transit Administration announced it would be withholding a 5% of federal formula grants beginning in fiscal year 2017 from all urbanized transit providers in each of the three jurisdictions, including VRE.

FTA’s Role in Safety Oversight
The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) assumed temporary safety oversight of the Washington Area Transit Authority (WMATA) as part of a US Secretary of Transportation mandate in the fall of 2015. The FTA maintains that the oversight is ultimately a State and District responsibility, and that a new State Safety Oversight Program (SSOP) must be established and certified. Last February, the FTA informed the three responsible jurisdictions – Virginia, Maryland, and DC – that they had one year to create a new SSOP for WMATA Metrorail that meets Federal requirements, and submit it to the FTA for certification. A new SSOP failed to form in time to meet the deadline, and on February 10th this year, the FTA announced that it will withhold five percent of the Fiscal Year 2017 transit formula for all the transit systems in Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia until a new SSOP is certified.

Both Virginia and the District of Columbia have passed identical legislation to enable the establishment the Safety Commission, and Maryland is expected to follow suit prior to the end of its session this month. Once this happens, the jurisdictions will work together to hire staff, and set up operations. Once the FTA has certified that the Commission is operational, it will turn over its safety oversight responsibilities, end the financial withholding penalties, and restore any lost federal revenues. In recognition of the potential financial difficulties that this action may cause Virginia transit systems, the General Assembly also passed legislation to provide “bridge loans” to help ensure uninterrupted operations during this period.
RIDERSHIP REACHES HISTORIC NUMBERS IN 2017
VRE CARRIES 100K RIDERS A WEEK

With each new year, many of us resolve to make positive changes to improve the quality of our daily lives. For some of you, it seems that riding the VRE was on the top of the list for 2017!

The boom in VRE ridership is record-breaking. We exceeded 100,000 riders each week for the first four full work weeks of the year. Typically, recent dramatic spikes in ridership directly coincide with WMATA’s SafeTrack Surges, however VRE reached these record-high numbers prior to the start of the scheduled 2017 Metrorail track work.

“We are encouraged about the conclusions we can draw from the early 2017 ridership numbers,” said Doug Allen, VRE’s Chief Executive Officer. “We believe this milestone suggests some new riders are staying with us after the surges conclude.”

The first time VRE reached 100,000 trips in a single week was last July during SafeTrack Surges #3 and #4. Surges #3 and #4 closed sections of both the Blue and Yellow lines in Northern Virginia. Fortunately for Metro riders, VRE provided an easy alternative method for the stops that run parallel with Metro between Springfield and Union Station. We were delighted to hear from new riders via e-mail, social media, and conversations with our conductors, that riding with us during the July surge was a positive experience, as we hope riding with us always is. The positive comments continue as we welcome new riders through the Metro surges.

VRE’s system supported the additional riders with an On-Time Performance average exceeding 90% during January and February. Many days we carried upwards of 2,000 more riders compared to the same dates last January and February. The Fredericksburg and Manassas lines shared the increase almost down the middle, at roughly 1,000 more passengers per day. In total, we carried an average increase of 10,000 more passengers a week than the same period in 2016.

The increasing ridership is why we continue to remain focused on our 2040 System Plan which will allow us to grow VRE’s capacity as the demand increases. We are focused on working together with our funding partners at the federal, state and local level to grow our system and continue to provide a safe, reliable and comfortable commute to our growing ridership.

HOW IS VRE FUNDED?

Approximately 50% of operating costs are recovered through passenger fares.

Most of the remaining 50% of our operating costs are paid by the state and participating jurisdictions.

Federal and state grants help us improve the system and expand for future population growth.
COMMUNITY EVENTS

Cabin Branch & Stone House Quilt Show
Saturday April 1, 10am - 5pm, Sunday April 2, 10am - 4pm
Prince William Fair Grounds
Over 200 quilts displayed, raffle, door prizes, silent auctions, quilting demonstrations, guild boutiques with handmade items and plenty of vendors. Learn more: www.cabinbranchquilters.org/quilt-show.htm

Courthouse Village Food Truck Rodeo
Saturday, April 8, 11am - 3pm
Spotsylvania Courthouse Village
Sample a wide selection of culinary delights from various Food Truck vendors as you enjoy relaxing music by local bands and other entertainment. For details visit: www.visitspotsy.com/food-truck

Beeping Egg Hunt
Sunday, April 9, 2pm - 4pm
Belmont
Belmont’s sixth annual Beeping Egg Hunt for visually impaired or blind children and their families. Bring your basket for an egg hunt. Refreshments, miniature animal petting zoo, crafts and Touch a Tractor. RSVP at mdolby@umw.edu or 540-654-1851.

Family Movie Night (Ice Age)
Friday, April 14, 7pm
Sherwood Community Center
Each family night movie is rated PG. An adult must accompany anyone under the age of 14. Donate to “Britepaths” Food Drive at Family Fun Nights. Find this event and other Sherwood Programs at: www.fairfaxva.gov

DISCOVER MERCY STREET: SHOW-INSPIRED ACTIVITIES IN ALEXANDRIA

History buffs and mainstream TV goers alike thought they were released from the spell of the hit Civil War-era drama Mercy Street as the show concluded its second season earlier this month. However, the City of Alexandria recently announced “The Costumes of PBS’ Mercy Street” in addition to twelve Mercy Street-inspired tours.

Inspired by real events in Alexandria during the Civil War, Mercy Street depicts the city as it was in the early 1860’s – a border town between North and South, ruled under martial law. The costume exhibit and tours invite visitors to learn about cultural fashion, food, and music; the real people behind the modern-day portrayals; Civil War medicine; developing roles of mid-19th century women; and the formidable tribulations of then-enslaved African-Americans. All of this is only a few blocks from the Alexandria VRE Station.

“The Costumes of PBS’ Mercy Street” will run through September 1, 2017 at The Lyceum: Alexandria’s History Museum. The exhibit features four original costumes and historical artifacts such as furniture from the Green furniture factory and medical supplies from the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum.

The Mercy Street-inspired city walking tours and in-depth historic site tours include:
• “Discovering Mercy Walking Tour” by Discover Alexandria
• “Freedom’s Fight in Alexandria” tour by Manumission Tour Company
• “Apothecary of Mercy Specialty Tour” at the Stabler-Leadbeater Apothecary Museum
• “Women of Civil War Alexandria Tour” by the National Women’s History Museum
• “The Mercy Walk” by Alexandria Colonial Tours
• “Mercy in Alexandria Tour” by DC Military Tours
• “Beyond the Battlefield” presented by Lee-Fendall House

For exhibit details and a full list of tours, visit: www.VisitAlexandriaVA.com/mercystreet

Photo credit: M. Enriquez for Visit Alexandria
SPOTLIGHT ON CINDY KING
MARKETING ADMINISTRATOR

Not all employees come to the VRE with a background in transit. Such is the case with our new Marketing Administrator, Cindy King. We believe her diverse background will bring new perspective — however we also anticipate that while her prior work history does not include transit, she is now in for the long haul with us at VRE. Like many on our team, Cindy commutes each day onboard a VRE train. Riding the VRE is something she has done off and on throughout her career beginning with her Smithsonian internship and then later to travel to client sites. She formerly boarded at the Fredericksburg station, but now starts her day at the Spotsylvania station. “While I do love the history and charm of the Fredericksburg station, I feel the Spotsylvania station really exemplifies what the VRE means to me: Convenience; Responsiveness to rider’s needs; and Development,” Cindy said.

As a passenger, Cindy sees the conductors’ emphasis on delivering everyone to their destinations as quickly and as safely as possible. As an employee, she sees the importance of safety as well as rider satisfaction is a result of the VRE’s commitment to making these the chief concerns throughout the organization. “It’s great to see the inner workings and then to experience the results with a first-hand view,” Cindy commented. “It’s reassuring to know that safety is engrained in the staff from day one. Plus, it’s an extremely friendly work environment.” A self-admitted “bad driver,” she is happy that the VRE provides a safe, comfortable way to commute and keeps her off the road.

“The VRE’s role in Northern Virginia’s congestion relief is quite dramatic. The plans for the future illustrate that the VRE is incredibly focused on the details, and will have an even more impressive impact on the I-95 and I-66 corridors over the next two decades,” said Cindy. “I am excited about being a part of something that improves the quality of life of so many, and really that means the lives of my fellow riders living in the suburbs – my neighbors.”

Cindy holds a BA in Art History from the University of Mary Washington. Her experience includes traditional print media, paid digital marketing and organic optimization, as well as video and events — spanning government communications, industrial marketing, and B2B and B2C e-commerce. She spends her evenings and weekends with her husband, two children, and two pugs.

BORN TO RIDE: LONGTIME VRE RIDER ENDURES LABOR ON A TRAIN

Beth Gamble — a VRE rider since 2000 — recently spoke with us about her experiences with the VRE over the years. Like many, Beth told us about the strong friendships she has formed with fellow riders, that she is always impressed with the management and crews’ desire to communicate and make improvements, and how VRE remains her preferred way to commute.

Where Beth might differ from most other riders, however, is the near birth of her son on an evening train. On Friday June 17, 2005, she was preparing to leave her office and walk to the station when it happened. Her water broke. Beth and her husband, who worked in Tysons Corner at the time, weighed the options and decided that the best plan was for her to take the train home as usual and he would pick her up at the station.

Self-conscious that she looked like she had wet herself, Beth kept to the grassy area behind the platform. Finally, a woman came over and asked if everything was OK. Beth explained that her water had broke and she was actually in labor. A few folks were within ear shot, and suddenly, she had a cadre of people watching over her and asking if there was anything they could do. “It was very sweet,” said Beth. “One of my best train buddies happened on the platform at that time and stayed with me on the ride, talking and making me laugh the whole ride. I made it to the hospital fairly relaxed and in plenty of time thanks to VRE and my wonderful fellow riders/friends.”

Beth’s son was almost born into this world as the youngest VRE rider in history. While he only narrowly missed that record, he soon returned as one of our junior riders. He traveled with Beth daily from ages 2 to 5, to commute to his preschool at her office. He occasionally joins her now in the summer for a downtown camp. She still gets many inquiries from fellow passengers who have watched him grow up on the train.
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UNATTENDED BAG HERE!

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REPORT UNATTENDED BAGS TO POLICE OR TRANSIT PERSONNEL.

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1-877-4VA-TIPS
VRE UPDATE

VRE SCHEDULE CHANGE

The new VRE Train Schedule went into effective March 6, 2017. The schedule contains some minor adjustments to accommodate new train travel patterns along the Northern Virginia rail corridor. We encourage VRE riders to access the schedule on their smartphone or other mobile devices through VRE’s Mobile App or website: vre.org

Get Noticed With VRE Advertising

VRE carries 20,000 passengers every workday and 70 percent of passengers have an annual household income of more than $100,000. Reach our passengers with advertising opportunities on our platforms, in our trains and through our award-winning RIDE Magazine.

For more information go to www.vre.org/advertising or contact advertising@vre.org or (703) 838-5425.

SEASON FINALE!

Appalachian Spring
AARON COPLAND

Concerto No. 1 for Horn
-Richard Strauss
Eric Ruske, horn
Pomp & Circumstance
No. 1 -Edward Elgar

Friday, April 28, 2017
7:30 p.m., Dodd Auditorium

FOR TICKETS:
umwphilharmonic.com or call 540/654-1324

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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VRE carries 20,000 passengers every workday and 70 percent of passengers have an annual household income of more than $100,000. Reach our passengers with advertising opportunities on our platforms, in our trains and through our award-winning RIDE Magazine.

For more information go to www.vre.org/advertising or contact advertising@vre.org or (703) 838-5425.
RAIL TIME PUZZLES

ACROSS
1 Small canyon
6 Mr. Pig
10 Need renewal
15 Young whale
19 Garnish
20 Underhanded plan
21 "That is . . ."
22 Reetase of tennis
23 Smart remarks
25 Not much time
27 Where some socks reach
28 Spherical strikers
30 Alternatives to Marriotts
31 Town near Santa Fe
32 Aunt of Bart Simpson
33 "Street" rep
34 Upward path
37 Sam, e.g.
38 Apportioned fairly
42 Navigator’s reference
43 Bombastic
45 Ber — (Heaton film)
46 Debt documents
47 Theatre tier
48 Peas in
49 Deep red
50 Half of MCCC
51 German entrance
55 Benevolent spirit
56 Stalag web
58 Portrayals
59 Less refined
60 People in general
61 Emphatic turn-down
62 Northwestern capital
63 Land between hills
65 Banker’s cue
66 Cabinet department
69 GI truants

70 Internet avoider, quite possibly
72 One on the force
73 Statutes
74 Wife of Jacob
75 Road grooves
76 Solving aid
77 Jargon suffix
78 Paul Revere profession
82 County bordering Galway
83 Tissue descriptor
85 Skip, as a syllable
86 Commanders
87 Corporate colleague of Budget
88 Thing in a ring
89 Showy neckwear
90 Popped up
91 Was concerned
94 Scolded
95 Where websites live
100 Bus ancestor
102 Bills, catalogs, etc.
103 The Metamorphosis author
104 Across’ land
105 Year in France
106 Heels of leaves
107 Explanation
108 Canvas quarters
109 High-pitched

71 Response to a sting
72 Seek info
73 What Aretha spells
74 in song
75 Gridiron guards
76 Frigidaire rival
77 Highlighters, for example
78 __ Paulo
79 Keep hidden
80 Noisy bug
81 Immensely
82 41 Down collection
83 Govt. agents
84 Barrel of laughs
85 Rubineks
86 Fashion mag
87 Express contempt
88 Sing like Bennett
89 Lab liquids
90 Astound
91 Close kin to broccoli
92 Driving forces
93 Speaks (up)
94 Sound from the sky
95 Blake of jazz fame
96 Laundry appliance
97 Wears a long face
98 Tubber, so to speak
99 Very thin
100 Put back to work
101 Marketing data
102 Gravy ingredient
103 Violinist’s accessory
104 Justice O’Connor successor
105 Stubborn dirt
106 Places to vote
107 Rooster toppers
108 Market subsegment
109 Place to vote

DOWN
1 Rubberneck
2 Valhalla VIP
3 Stood up
4 Ceremonial hosts
5 Captivate
6 Talks big
7 Parking attendant
8 Teeming with
9 Water slide
10 Wine and dine
11 Blunted blades
12 Narrates
13 Self-esteem
14 Skating champ at Nagano
15 Narrow escape
16 Disconnect
17 Secluded sanctuary
18 Member of the plum family
19 Way of thinking
20 Model train component
21 Studio stands
22 Compost Porter
23 Potato parcles
24 Engender
25 Jeopardy! rarity
26 Peak of perfection
27 TV host Seacrest
28 Footnote notation
29 Small eater
30 Wild tale
31 Certain Scandinavian
32 Sailed through
33 People in general
34 ___ Thai (rice-noodle dish)

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"No, I’m working from work today."
IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.

REPORT SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR LIKE CONCEALING ITEMS UNDER CLOTHING OR SURVEILLANCE OF TRANSIT EQUIPMENT TO POLICE OR TRANSIT PERSONNEL.

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