

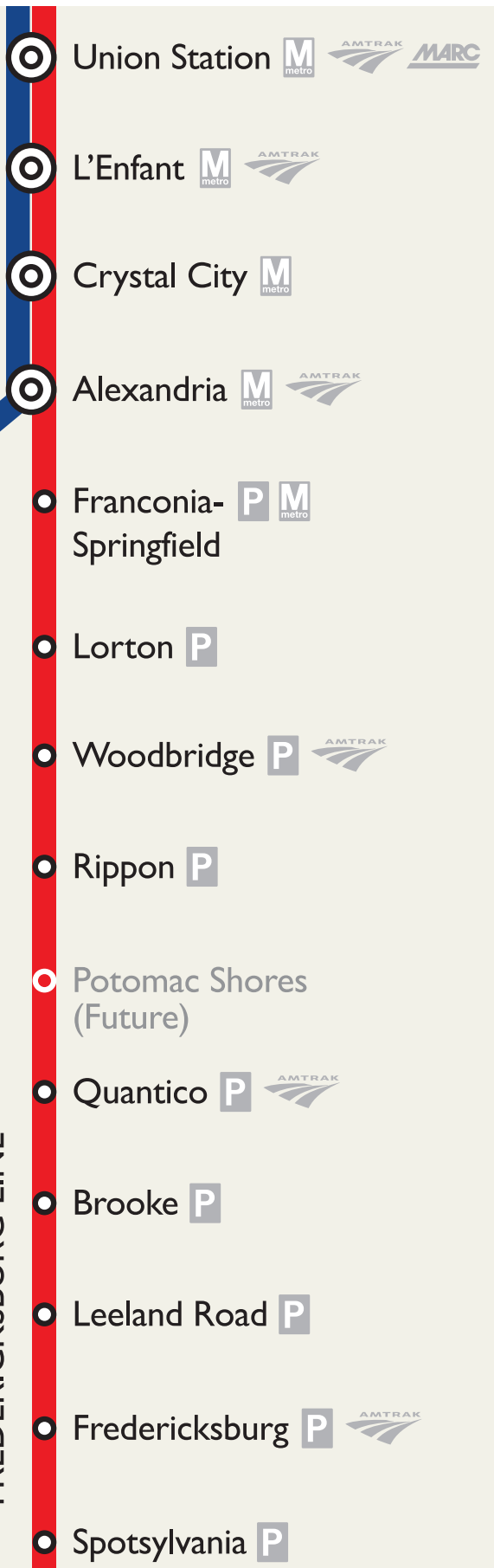
2023 Annual Report Virginia Railway Express



VRE is a transportation partnership of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission.



DC



Backlick Road

Rolling Road

Burke Centre

Manassas Park

Manassas

Broad Run

MANASSAS LINE

VIRGINIA

FREDERICKSBURG LINE

Contents

○	04	Message from the CEO & Chair
○	05	Operations Board
○	06	Operations
○	08	Audit & Budget
○	09	Transforming Rail in Virginia
○	10	Capital Projects
○	14	Safety
○	16	Government Affairs
○	17	Professional Engagement
○	18	Recognition
○	19	Partnerships
○	20	Outreach
○	21	Events

Joint Message from the CEO & Chair

2023 was a year of transition, a year during which VRE began laying the foundation for a more robust rail system. The potential addition of Saturday service next summer or fall received approval from the Operations Board at year's end and will be taken up by VRE's parent commissions in early 2024.

An update to our System Plan, to be finalized next year, identifies service alternatives that VRE could offer by 2030, when various rail infrastructure improvements come online. The Operations Board's preferred alternative would rebalance weekday service, add some reverse-flow and express trains, and expand weekend service. This plan ultimately will provide a vision for the future of VRE service through 2050.

Several construction projects needed to support the proposed expansion of service were completed, launched, or remained underway in 2023. VRE's 33,000 square-foot Lifecycle Overhaul and Upgrade Facility, which allows us to do heavy maintenance onsite, opened in late summer. Work started on the rehabilitation of the Fredericksburg station and construction of parking garages at the Manassas Park and future Potomac Shores stations. Improvements to the Quantico station advanced appreciably. We also learned VRE will receive an additional \$21 million in funding over the next several years, the bulk of which will go toward the relocation of our Crystal City station.

Expanded service will help VRE reach new customers, beyond the traditional commuter, and grow ridership. That said, our trains carried over 1.5 million passengers in 2023, a more than 30 percent increase from the year prior. Our Fare-Free Friday initiative this summer was well received and bumped up Friday ridership by 44 percent. In January, VRE hit a ridership milestone – 95 million passengers since its inception in 1992.

Safety – always VRE's top priority – was the focus of several outreach efforts and first-responder trainings. VRE supplied libraries and preschools along our two lines with rail-safety picture books and staff participated in story time readings. In the fall, VRE partnered with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, holding a tactical training at the Broad Run Maintenance and Storage Facility for approximately 70 police K-9 teams from across the nation. Our new Risk-Based Hazard Management Committee began implementing a plan to ultimately eliminate or mitigate risks in our rail environment.

VRE continued its community outreach and special event participation, adding the Fredericksburg Christmas Parade to the lineup. Targeted outreach to realtors in the region and households near our Burke Centre and Fredericksburg stations sought to raise VRE's brand awareness.

Transitions can be challenging. But due to decades of strong financial management and stewardship by the Operations Board, VRE ended 2023 perfectly positioned to begin its evolution from a commuter- to a regional-rail service. For VRE, the future looks bright.



James Walkinshaw
*Operations
Board Chair*

Rich Dalton
*Chief Executive
Officer*





VRE Operations Board

A new executive committee, with a fresh agenda, took the helm of the VRE Operations Board in January.

THE BOARD, chaired by Fairfax County Supervisor James Walkinshaw, advanced numerous projects and initiatives, detailed in the pages that follow, to ensure VRE's financial stability and long-term viability.

VRE Operations Board Members

Top row from left to right: Lori Hayes, Spotsylvania County; Meg Bohmke, Stafford County; Dan Storck, Fairfax County; Michael McLaughlin, Virginia Passenger Rail Authority; James Walkinshaw, Fairfax County; Ralph Smith, City of Manassas; Takis Karantonis, Arlington County; Monica Gary, Stafford County.

Bottom row from left to right: Margaret Franklin, Prince William County; Sarah Bagley, City of Alexandria; Andrea Bailey, Prince William County.

Not pictured: Matt Kelly, City of Fredericksburg; Jeanine Lawson, Prince William County; Alanna Mensing, City of Manassas Park.

Operations

Ridership was up more than 30 percent from 2022, going from 1,166,830 to 1,536,870. Average daily ridership went from 6,011 in January to a high of 6,580 in October before closing the year at 5,123. VRE also celebrated a ridership milestone in January, carrying 95 million riders since service began in June of 1992.

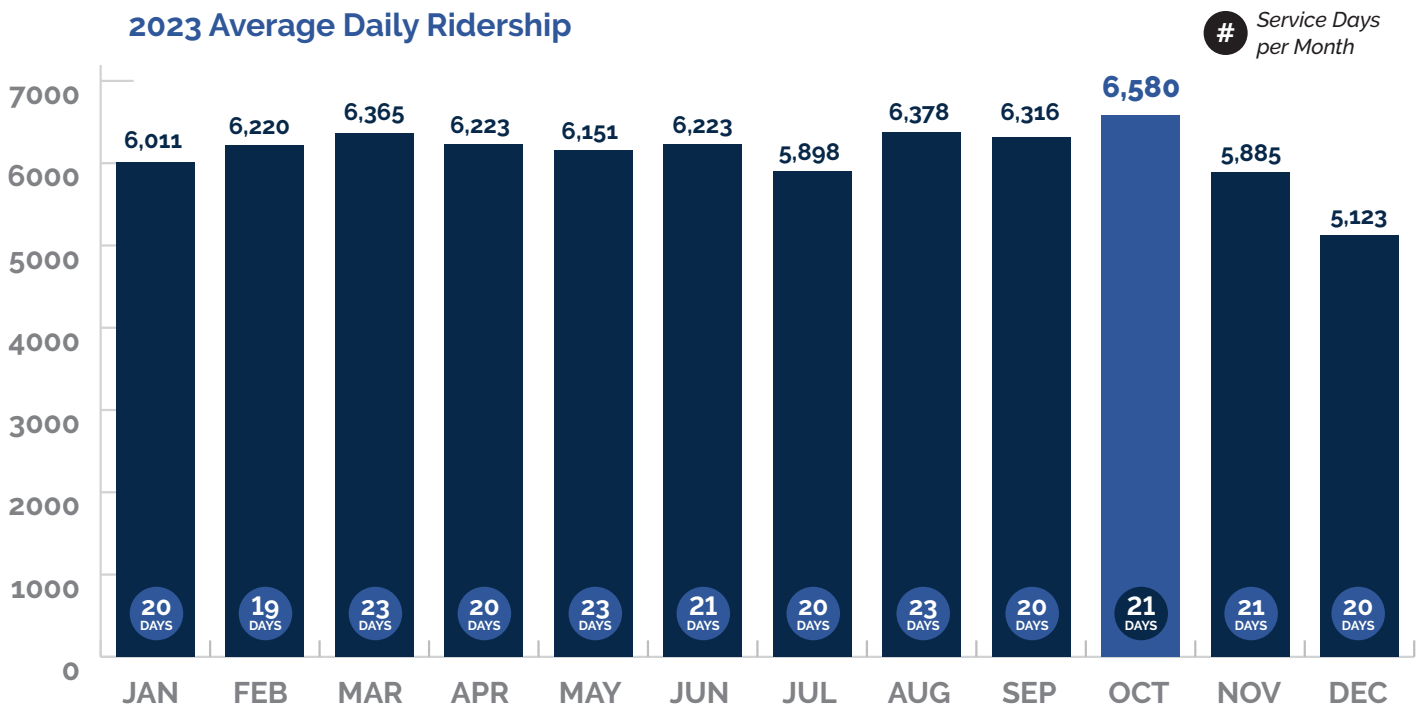
VRE'S SUMMER PROMOTION — Fare-Free Fridays — exposed the rail service to new markets, including day-trippers. Strollers and backpacks joined commuters' bicycles and briefcases for excursions to Alexandria, Virginia and Washington, D.C. The number of passengers on Friday, traditionally the lowest ridership day of the week, grew by 44 percent.

30% increase
in Average Daily Ridership over 2022

FARE FREE FRIDAY 06/02 THRU 09/01

VRE will be **FREE** every **FRIDAY** from **JUN. 2** through **SEP. 1**

VRE





VRE and Keolis staff wait to welcome the first passengers of the morning after placing Customer Service Surveys on seats throughout the railcars.



What started as a promotional fare to encourage Northern Virginia riders to use VRE for their commutes was made permanent by the Operations Board in December when it approved the fiscal year 2025 budget. Those traveling within zones 1 (*Washington Union Station and L'Enfant*), 2 (*Crystal City and Alexandria*) and 3 (*Backlick Road and Franconia-Springfield*) will pay a flat \$5 fare using VRE Mobile.

Worsening congestion on the rail lines and at Union Station dropped VRE's on-time performance for the year to 83 percent, beneath its 90 percent goal. VRE considers a train delayed when it arrives at its destination more than five minutes late. While the Fredericksburg Line exceeded the goal several months during the year, issues affecting the Manassas Line, particularly in July and August, helped drive down overall system on-time performance.

The results of VRE's Customer Service Survey were generally consistent with 2022, indicating high levels of satisfaction in key areas. Those pleased with VRE's overall quality of service rose one point to 93 percent, while the rating of VRE's crew performance remained stable at 96 percent.

Preliminary results from VRE's Master Agreement Survey were shared with the Operations Board in November. Survey data is used as the basis for calculating jurisdictional subsidy allocations and to inform other decisions. Results showed a slight shift in the share of riders in the seven jurisdictions VRE tracks. Fairfax and Prince William counties experienced a decline, while the cities of Fredericksburg, Manassas, and Manassas Park, as well as Spotsylvania and Stafford counties, posted increases.



Audit & Budget

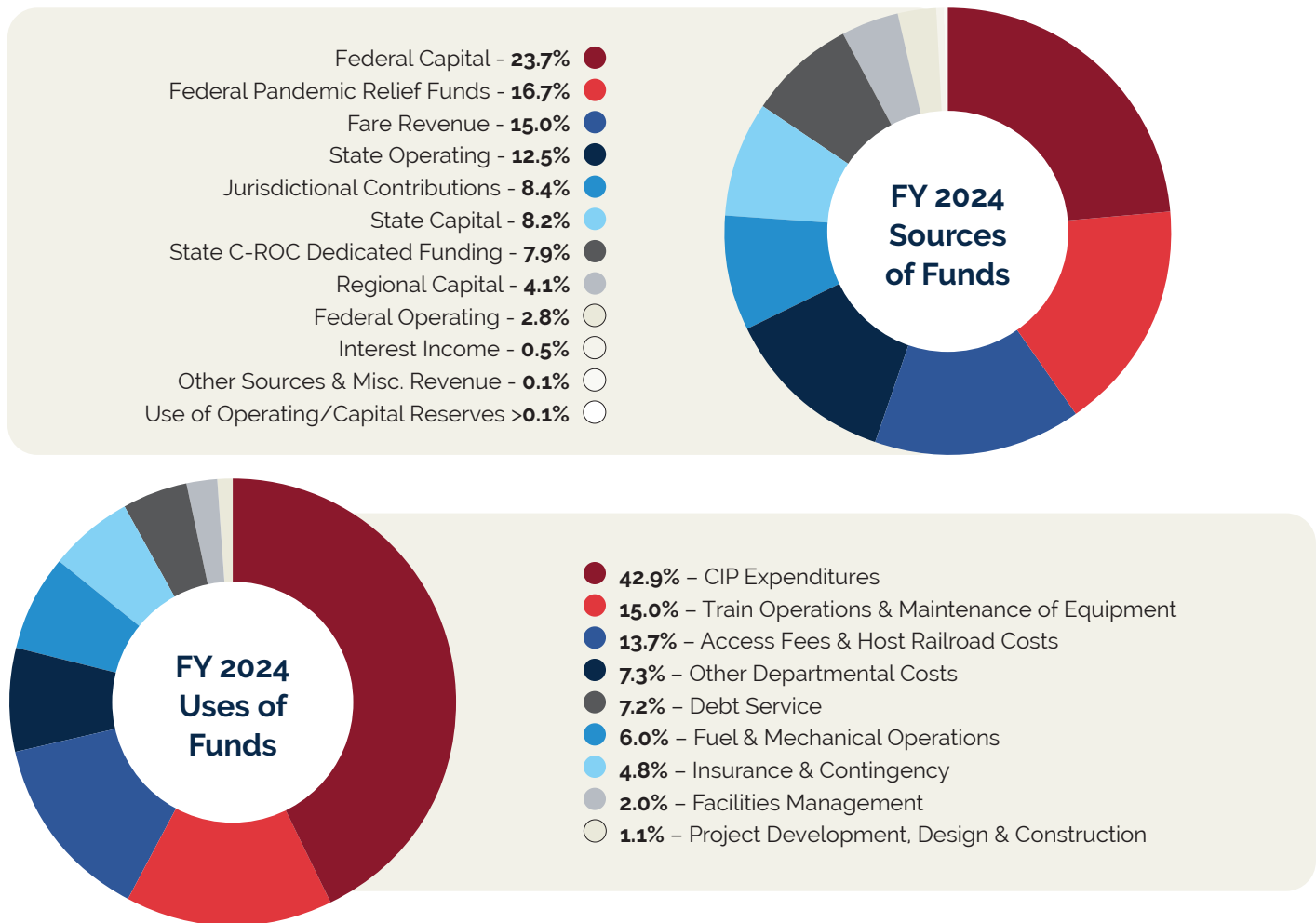
VRE RECEIVED an unmodified opinion for the audit of its fiscal year (FY) 2023 financial statements from PBMares LLP in November. The opinion letter notes that VRE's statements, in all material respects, fairly and accurately present the financial position of the organization. This opinion is the best outcome of a financial audit.

For the 16th consecutive year, VRE received a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for our Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. The certificate, awarded by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting. An impartial GFOA panel determined VRE's financial report for fiscal years ending June 2022 and 2021 met the association's highest standards, demonstrating a spirit of transparency and full disclosure that clearly

communicates an organization's financial story and motivates potential users to read the report.

The continued allocation of federal pandemic relief funds allowed VRE to program a balanced budget for FY 2024, which began July 1, 2023. Those funds, comprising about 17 percent of the \$190.7 million operating and capital budget, mitigated a decline in farebox revenue and provided continued subsidy relief to the local jurisdictions.

Budgeted operating expenses of \$95.2 million were 4 percent higher than the year prior and capital commitments of \$81.8 million were 6.7 percent lower. Non-operating expenses more than doubled due to debt service on the bonds sold in 2022 to help fund the commonwealth's Transforming Rail in Virginia initiative.



Transforming Rail in Virginia

THE TRANSFORMING RAIL IN VIRGINIA INITIATIVE took significant steps forward in 2023. As a funding partner and future beneficiary of this \$4 billion program, VRE continued to reimburse the Virginia Passenger Rail Authority (VPRRA) up to \$7.5 million per year from Commuter Rail Operating and Capital funds to support critical infrastructure improvements in VRE's service area. That was in addition to the \$119.2 million VRE provided last year through the sale of green bonds.

Major contributions from the federal government were announced in the fall of 2023. A \$100 million grant went toward advancing the final design and construction of a Franconia-Springfield bypass. The nearly mile-long rail bridge will cross over two existing freight tracks, allowing passenger trains to reach station stops on the opposite side. The VPRRA board, which includes VRE's CEO as an ex-officio member, also selected a construction team for the bypass project. Clearing and early construction work are anticipated to begin in March 2024. Full construction is expected to commence later in 2024 and last for two years.

A \$729 million federal grant to help fund the new Long Bridge over the Potomac River and other infrastructure improvements was included in an \$8.2 billion package for rail infrastructure improvements nationwide. The new bridge will allow for the separation of freight and passenger trains. Additional track and station improvements at L'Enfant and construction of a combined nine miles of third track at three locations within the VRE service area also will benefit from the grant.

A consultant team to take the Long Bridge-North project, from the design phase through construction, received approval from the VPRRA board in December. The project includes replacement of an existing pedestrian bridge and three two-track bridges, as well as a new rail bridge over the Metrorail portal and I-395. Prep work is anticipated to begin in 2024, with full construction commencing in early 2025. Construction is expected to be complete in 2030.

VRE continued to support TRV through station and rail infrastructure improvements. Its \$1.3 billion Capital Improvements Program was more than two-thirds funded. Among the projects were those that would lengthen existing and build new platforms to accommodate longer trains and allow for the simultaneous boarding of two trains at a station.



Several VRE Operations Board members join state and federal officials to celebrate the receipt of a \$729 million grant to fund parts of TRV.



The Franconia-Springfield Bypass (above) and second Long Bridge over the Potomac (below) will separate freight and passenger rail trains.



Capital Projects

Work continued on an update to the VRE System Plan. The Operations Board held a retreat in June, taking a deep dive into various service alternatives proposed by staff following significant research, analysis, and public outreach. The preferred 2030 alternative would rebalance weekday service, add some reverse-flow and express trains, and expand weekend service. In October, the board approved a task order for the final phase of plan development, which includes the identification and refinement of a recommended 2050 service scenario.

Quantico Station Improvements

Significant progress was made on improvements to VRE's Quantico station. At year's end the towers supporting the new pedestrian bridge were nearing completion, with elevator installation to begin in 2024. An island platform that will serve one of the existing tracks and a new third track was in place. When completed next year, this \$27.5 million project will improve passenger safety and enhance operational efficiency.

Fredericksburg Station Rehabilitation

While work on the \$14.4 million rehabilitation of the Fredericksburg station will continue into next year, the results to date give a preview of the transformation that ultimately will unfold. The deep cleaning of concrete rail bridges in the historic downtown has removed decades of grime and stains. Work to extend the east platform was finished and the west is underway. A set of stairs, constructed near the end of the platform extensions, will soon allow passengers to cross over Princess Anne Street rather than at grade.



Left: Work on the elevator towers at the Quantico station nears completion.

Right: Improvements to the platform at the Fredericksburg station will accommodate longer trains, reducing dwell times, and enhance the passenger experience.



Lifecycle Overhaul and Upgrade Facility

More than 100 elected and appointed officials, VRE's contracting and funding partners, and jurisdictional staff turned out in late June to celebrate the opening of the new \$52.7 million Lifecycle Overhaul and Upgrade (LOU) Facility. The 33,000 square-foot facility allows for heavy maintenance to be performed onsite.

The LOU eliminates the cost of transporting rolling stock to other repair sites and reduces the amount of time equipment is out of service. The facility gives VRE the ability to optimize maintenance and curtail expenses by routinely replacing items before they fail. It also allows for safer maintenance. For example, the new wheel truing machine and drop table eliminate the need to jack up rolling stock to service or swap out trucks and wheelsets.

Top row: VRE staff prepare for the open house to celebrate the Lifecycle Overhaul and Upgrade (LOU) Facility grand opening.

Bottom left: VRE and Keolis staff join a host of dignitaries for a luncheon and remarks at the LOU open house.

Bottom right: From left to right: VRE Operations Board Members Meg Bohmke (vice chair), Sarah Bagley (treasurer) and Ralph Smith (secretary); Department of Rail and Public Transportation Director Jennifer DeBruhl; and Operations Board Members Michael McLaughlin, James Walkinshaw (chair), Lori Hayes and Andrea Bailey celebrate the LOU grand opening.



Potomac Shores Parking Garage

Groundbreaking ceremonies took place at the locations of two new parking garages. VRE Operations Board members Andrea Bailey and Margaret Franklin joined CEO Rich Dalton and others in May to kick off construction of a \$24 million garage with 400 parking spaces adjacent to the future VRE Potomac Shores station. The month prior they — along with DJ Stadtler, VPRA's executive director, and Peter Chavkin, managing member of Biddle Real Estate Ventures which is funding and constructing both the garage and station — participated in the signing of a framework agreement identifying actions the partners will take to advance the station's construction.



Left: From left to right: Biddle Real Estate Venture's Peter Chavkin, VRE Operations Board Member Andrea Bailey, VRE CEO Rich Dalton, Prince William County Board of Supervisors Chair Ann Wheeler, VPRA Executive Director DJ Stadtler, VRE Operations Board Member Margaret Franklin at the Potomac Shores garage groundbreaking ceremony.

Right: Work progresses on the Potomac Shores parking garage.



VRE Operations Board Chair James Walkinshaw (third from left), CEO Rich Dalton (fourth from left) and staff members Dallas Richards (fifth from right) and Jason Bortz (third from right) join Manassas Park Mayor Jeanette Rishell (sixth from right), city staff and contracting partners to break ground for a new parking garage.

Crystal City Station Construction

Construction of a new Crystal City station received a boost in June when the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved \$10.8 million in funding through the I-395/95 Commuter Choice program. Another \$8 million for the station will be included in the 2026-2027 round of funding. The \$69 million project, which is now fully funded, includes an island platform to enable the simultaneous boarding of two trains and allows for a future multimodal connection, being planned by Arlington County, from the station to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

Track 22 Rehabilitation Project

As part of the Washington Union Station master planning process, the Track 22 Rehabilitation Project was identified as a priority project that, if accelerated, would reduce current train congestion for both Amtrak and VRE service. After Amtrak received a grant from the Federal Railroad Administration for 50 percent of the project's projected \$38.1 million cost, VRE's parent commissions agreed to contribute \$6.3 million as part of the local match needed to rehab Track 22, which is expected to open in early 2024.

Manassas Park Parking Garage

A July groundbreaking ceremony for the 560-space Manassas Park parking garage brought together leaders from several transportation funding organizations, the city and VRE, including Operations Board Chair James Walkinshaw and Member Alanna Mensing, who serves on the city's governing body. The event highlighted the partnerships that allowed construction to move forward. The \$35 million parking facility was funded by multiple organizations including the city, Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA), Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC), Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), and concessionaire for the I-66 outside the Beltway toll lanes.



Safety

VRE'S NEW RISK-BASED HAZARD MANAGEMENT

Committee convened for the first time in April. The committee, which is made up of representatives from all major operational divisions at VRE and Keolis Rail Services Virginia, was tasked with implementing VRE's recently established Risk-Based Hazard Management (RBHM) Program.

RBHM refers to the processes used to identify and analyze hazards in the rail environment, assess and rank their corresponding risks, and eliminate or mitigate the resulting risks. VRE's RBHM Program is predictive or forward-looking in nature and maximizes the use of resources on a dollar-for-dollar basis, maximizing overall safety impact.

Eight injury-free years by the Keolis mechanical team at VRE's Broad Run Maintenance and Storage Facility was cause for celebration in November. It was a significant accomplishment considering that over a similar time period more than 33,500 railroad workers were injured, an average of 3,800 annually. VRE and Keolis managers honored the accomplishment with an award ceremony and food-truck dinner.

Designed to familiarize law enforcement partners with the most important elements of the railroad and rail equipment, a K-9 training hosted by VRE took place in November at the Broad Run Maintenance and Storage Facility. The event drew handler/canine teams from more than 70 organizations — some from as far away as Ohio, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina. Several federal agencies — including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Transportation Safety Administration, Homeland Security Administration, and U.S. Capitol Police — participated.

Safety trainings with first responders in several jurisdictions — including Stafford, Caroline and Spotsylvania counties and the City of Manassas — featured hands-on and classroom activities. Topics covered included regular train operations, hazards of the rail environment, equipment familiarization, and incident response procedures with a focus on case studies, and lessons learned from historic rail accidents and incidents in the United States.

In recognition of National Rail Safety Week in September, VRE participated in initiatives to support



Left to right: VRE and Keolis staff celebrate eight injury-free years; VRE's RBHM plan is being implemented by a newly established committee; Members of the Stafford County SWAT Team train at VRE's Crossroads Maintenance and Storage Facility.





railroad safety education in its jurisdictions. Staff teamed up with host railroads — as well as the cities of Manassas and Fredericksburg, and Stafford County — to host crossing blitzes, where they distributed safety information to motorists at railroad crossings. VRE also reformatted an Operation Livesaver picture book and began distributing copies to libraries throughout its nine jurisdictions. Staff also participated in story-time readings of the book at libraries.

A February lunch-and-learn at VRE headquarters focused on office security. Speakers from the U.S. Transportation Security Administration shared ways VRE staff can protect themselves and their colleagues and create a safe environment for employees and visitors.

First-aid, cardiopulmonary-respiration, and automated-external-defibrillator certification for VRE staff took place in December. A two-hour online course was followed by hands-on instruction and practice.

Top row: VRE's Charlotte Nourse (left), Loren Hill (center) and Detrius Williams (right) take rail safety education to area libraries.

Bottom row, left to right: Law enforcement officers join VRE and Keolis staff for a rail safety crossing blitz, emphasizing "See Tracks? Think Train."

VRE staff practice CPR during a December training.



Government Affairs

The Commonwealth Transportation Board approved changes to the way the VRE is funded. VRE will now be allocated funding based on metrics that are specific to its needs. The 2023 amendments to Section 33.2-1526.1 (D)(3) of the Code of Virginia stipulate 3.5 percent of the state's Mass Transit Fund may be allocated to VRE for operating and capital expenses. Funding is contingent on various service delivery factors including effectiveness and efficiency.

VRE JOINED an alphabet soup of organizations — CTB, DRPT, NVTA, NVTC and VDOT — in May for the region's annual Joint Transportation Meeting. Staff were on hand to answer questions about VRE capital projects and service, and Operations Board Chair James Walkinshaw represented the rail service on the panel convened to accept public comment regarding the commonwealth's Six-Year Improvement Program.

Newly elected and returning General Assembly members and others in the business community learned of VRE's legislative priorities during a December transportation forum. CEO Rich Dalton, who was joined by leaders from OmniRide and Metro, spoke to the value VRE brings to the region and the importance of continuing support for Transforming Rail in Virginia.



Left to right: Commonwealth Transportation Board Member Mary Hynes (center) joins VRE's Nick Ruiz (left) and Karen Finucan Clarkson at VRE's table at the Joint Transportation Meeting; VRE Operations Board Chair James Walkinshaw (holding mic) represents the rail service at the Joint Transportation Meeting.

Professional Engagement

VRE staff, recognized as experts in many areas, shared their thoughts and analysis with peers across the nation at several events.

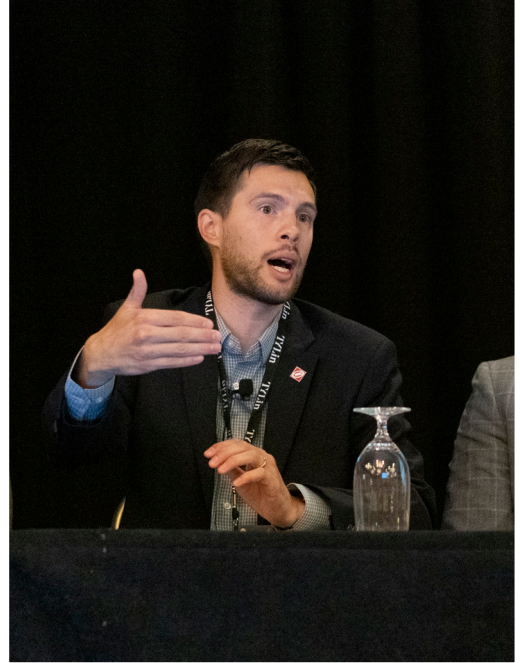
IN SEPTEMBER, VRE's Planning Program Manager Nick Ruiz was part of a panel discussion at the Commuter Rail Coalition's (CRC) conference titled "Becoming the Transportation Provider of Choice in a Changing Landscape." The question posed: "As the transportation landscape continues to shift in a post-COVID world, how does commuter rail become a traveler's mode of choice?" His response: "By meeting and exceeding the changing needs of riders and offering amenities they can either only find on commuter rail or are superior on commuter rail."

At the conference, VRE CEO Rich Dalton moderated a session on innovations. "From cutting edge to bleeding edge" panelists shared the innovations agencies need to know about to save time, save money, and reduce opportunities for human failure.

A November webinar brought together Dalton and the directors of VPRA and DRPT to update more than 300 viewers on passenger rail infrastructure projects across the commonwealth. The interactive hour-long program was sponsored by Virginians for High Speed Rail.

The CRC's November Passenger Rail Law Workshop featured VRE General Counsel Steve Maclsaac as a panelist. Maclsaac presented on the topic of passenger-freight interactions, sharing VRE's experience in building strong working relationships with its three host railroads — CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern, and Amtrak.

Artificial intelligence, machine learning, internet of things, and industrial internet of things were among the topics discussed at the Cyber Never Sleeps summit, in which Robert Hostelka, VRE's IT director, participated in October. This was the fourth year Hostelka served as a panelist at the event, sponsored by the Fredericksburg Regional Chamber of Commerce.



Top to bottom: Planning Program Manager Nick Ruiz participates in a panel discussion at the CRC summit; CEO Rich Dalton moderates a panel at the CRC summit; IT Director Robert Hostelka takes part in the Cyber Never Sleeps summit.

Recognition

The Virginia Transit Association bestowed its Outstanding Contribution by an Individual award to former Operations Board Member and Chair Katie Cristol for her work over seven-plus years advancing regional and statewide public transportation initiatives. The nomination was a collaborative effort that included VRE, NVTA, NVTC and Arlington County. The awards ceremony took place in May during VTA's annual conference.

THE TRANSPORTATION-RELATED ACCOMPLISHMENTS of the late VRE Operations Board Member and Alexandria Council Member Lois Walker were extolled during a plaque installation ceremony at the Alexandria station in October. Walker was a staunch advocate for multimodal transportation, especially passenger rail, in Northern Virginia. She was instrumental in convincing the freight railroad's real estate division to donate Alexandria Union Station to the city in 2000.



Former VRE Operations Board Chair Katie Cristol (center) accepts VTA's award for Outstanding Contribution by an Individual. She is joined by NVTC Executive Director Kate Mattice (second from right), VRE's Karen Finucan Clarkson (third from right), and staff from Arlington County.

Partnerships

VRE joined several partners to share information about upcoming projects. In September, VRE staff participated in Arlington County's CC2DCA open house pertaining to its proposed multimodal transportation connection from VRE's future Crystal City Station to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

PLANNED INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS along King Street and Commonwealth Avenue in Alexandria — designed to improve safety and sustainability — were the focus of an open house in November at the Alexandria station. The event, organized by the city, featured staff from VRE, VPRA and AlexRenew



Jason Bortz, VRE's project manager for design and construction, participates in two community outreach events - one pertaining to improvements to the Alexandria station (left) and the other to a the proposed CC2DCA project (above).



Outreach

VRE STAFF hosted several system tours — with Operations Board members, elected officials from its jurisdictions, and staff from various agencies within the commonwealth — to familiarize them with the rail system. The tours gave participants a greater understanding of VRE's current service and future potential.

Realtor Listings

"Listing or showing a house near a VRE station? Make proximity a selling point." That was the message staff shared with several thousand realtors in the fall as they worked to enlist realtors as VRE ambassadors. The effort resulted in a more than 100 percent mentions of VRE in realtor listings.

YouTube Channel

Unsure how to purchase or validate a ticket, recover a lost item, or bring a bike onboard? The answers to these and other questions can now be found on VRE's YouTube channel. Eleven videos, produced by VRE's marketing team, help current and prospective passengers overcome what some of them may see as challenges to riding VRE. The videos, which range in length from about 20-90 seconds, were rolled out individually over several weeks in the fall.

Construction Coffee

VRE held its inaugural "Construction Coffee" in January to inform residents and business owners near the Fredericksburg station about details related to the rehabilitation project and answer questions. Given the coffee talk's success, VRE plans to hold construction coffee events at locations near future projects.

Summer Interns

More than 20 students from the U.S. Department of Transportation's summer intern program joined VRE's operations staff for a system tour in August. The interns boarded the first Manassas Line afternoon train at Union Station and rode to Broad Run, where they toured the yard and received a briefing on mechanical and maintenance operations. The group returned later in the afternoon on a reverse-flow train.



How to...
Purchase A Ticket on Your Mobile Device



Top row, left to right: USDOT interns tour VRE's Broad Run Maintenance and Storage Facility; Fairfax County Supervisor Rodney Lusk (center) joins VRE CEO Rich Dalton (left) and Chief Engineer Dallas Richards (right) for a tour of Amtrak's Ivy City Coach Yard where VRE trains are stored between AM and PM service; Eleven new "How to..." videos to assist passengers were rolled out in the fall.

Bottom row, left to right: CEO Rich Dalton shares information about the Fredericksburg station rehab project at a Construction Coffee; Operations Board Member Lori Hayes takes a VRE system tour.



Events

VRE expanded its participation in community events within the jurisdictions it serves in 2023.

Fredericksburg Christmas Parade

The Fredericksburg Christmas parade presented VRE staff with a unique challenge — designing a float with a theme of “Christmas Under the Sea.” The float was well received. Many of the thousands of viewers lining the streets of the historic downtown waived, made train sounds, and applauded as VRE’s Trident Express passed by.

Santa Trains

A holiday tradition cherished by families, VRE’s Santa Trains brought good cheer to more than 11,000 enthralled passengers in December. During the 75-minute excursion, Santa, Mrs. Claus, and their elves listened to children’s Christmas wishes and handed out goodie bags. As in the past, this year’s Santa Trains included educational (*highlighting rail safety to children*) and charitable (*encouraging support of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program*) components. Through collections from weekday commuters and Santa Train passengers, VRE donated about 2,000 toys in 2023.

Tour de VRE

Sunny skies and light winds guided some 70 riders along the path of this year’s Tour de VRE. The event attracted participants from more than a dozen organizations - including other transportation agencies, such as DRPT and VPRA, and private sector partners. Operations Board Member Sarah Bagley joined the ride again this year. The third annual event drew participants from across the DMV and two from the Raleigh, North Carolina area. Tour de VRE is designed to promote bikes on trains, increase camaraderie between the staffs of transportation-related organizations, and — since it occurs in October — raise funds for triple negative breast cancer.



VRE’s first-ever float appears in the Fredericksburg Christmas Parade.



A marine from Marine Corps Base Quantico collects gifts for Toys for Tots during VRE’s annual Santa Train event.



Two of the 11,000 Santa Train passengers pose with Mr. Claus.



One of several pelotons participating in the third annual Tour de VRE.





Bike-to-Work Day

On Bike-to-Work Day in May, VRE staff joined sponsors — including Operations Board Members Margaret Franklin and Alanna Mensing — at five stations, sharing information on VRE's bikes-on-trains policy.

Meet the Management

Recognizing that every VRE rider is a very important passenger, commuters received VIP notebooks, pens, and water bottles at Meet the Management events in June at the Alexandria, Crystal City, and L'Enfant stations. These meet-and-greets gave passengers the opportunity to speak with the CEO, senior managers, and other staff. Riders inquired about station improvements, possible weekend service, and additional weekday trains, to name a few.

Clifton Day Festival

Trains are cool. That was the sentiment expressed by young and old alike at the 55th annual Clifton Day festival. The first Saturday in October is the only day when VRE trains stop in Clifton. VRE and Keolis personnel staffed the platforms and trains, which ran between the Manassas and Rolling Road stations, with stops at Manassas Park, Clifton, and Burke Centre. Operations Board Chair James Walkinshaw and Member Alanna Mensing attended the event.

Manassas Railway Festival

Sunshine and a slight breeze — not to mention VRE — attracted several thousand people to the 29th annual Manassas Railway Festival in June. VRE ran four non-stop excursion trains, to Clifton and back three of which were packed. VRE staff were joined by several Keolis and Historic Manassas staff on the platform to assist passengers. A storm trooper, Miss Fairfax Volunteer Christina Blake, and Manassas Mayor Michelle Davis-Younger rode the first train of the morning, interacting with passengers and posing for photos.

Great Train Race

VRE tattoos and clappers were ubiquitous at the Great Train Race in Fredericksburg in May. Some 1,400 runners competed in distances ranging from a quarter mile (*ages 5 and under*) to a half mile (*ages 10 and under*) to one mile (*ages 6-17*). Operations Board Member Monica Gary had two daughters compete, with one finishing second in her age group and second among all girls in the one mile and the other finishing first in her age group and seventh overall among girls in the event. Coincidentally, the younger daughter won the division VRE sponsored (*girls 12-13*).

(1) VRE social media posts promoted Bike-to-Work Day. (2) Miss Fairfax Volunteer Christina Blake rides VRE during the Manassas Rail Festival. (3) Manassas Mayor Michelle Davis-Younger and a constituent give a thumbs up at the festival. (4) VRE staff prepare for Meet the Management. (5) A VRE train brings passengers to the Clifton Day Festival. (6) VRE staff hand out tattoos and clappers at the Great Train Race. (7) A young runner sports a VRE tattoo on her cheek.



THE VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS (VRE), a joint project of the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission, will provide safe, cost effective, accessible, reliable, convenient, and comfortable commuter-oriented rail passenger service. VRE will contribute to the economic development of its member jurisdictions as an integral part of a balanced, intermodal regional transportation system.





 www.VRE.org  [RideVRE](#)  [VARailExpress](#)  [VirginiaRailwayExpress](#)

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