



# VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

## Update



703-684-1001

www.vre.org

April 4, 2007

### Editor's Note

Feedback is critical to VRE. We work hard to provide many methods of communication so we can know how we are doing. Having feedback only works if you are willing to share your opinion.

Over the next few months, the number of opportunities for you to share your thoughts with us will increase. This afternoon, we have our on-line forum, where you can ask questions of our CEO. Throughout the month, and on into summer, we will be visiting each of our stations for some face to face communication. Then, later this spring, we will conduct our annual customer survey. All in all, we are confident that whether you are feeling great about having an important item returned or frustrated about missing your connection, we will know.

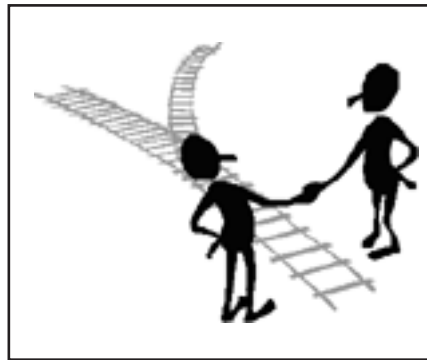
Feel free to share your thoughts, we're listening!

## Compromise Made on FRCs & Step-Ups

Earlier this year, VRE proposed several changes aimed at reducing operating costs and streamlining some administrative details. Two of those proposals were to eliminate the on-time service guarantee and to increase the Step-Up fare for VRE riders using Amtrak trains from \$2 to \$10.

Since the proposals were first developed, VRE has held a series of five public hearings and has captured a great deal of input from e-mails, personal conversations and, of course, from the hearings themselves. Based on your feedback, VRE's

CEO recommended changes to those proposals which the Operations Board approved in March.



First, instead of eliminating the on-time service guarantee, Free Ride Certificates (FRCs) will be handed out when trains are one hour late, rather than the current 30 minute threshold. VRE will make administrative changes to make the program more efficient.

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## Earn \$25 Gift Card to Home Depot!

### *It's Easy – Just Share a Ride to VRE*

If you use the Fredericksburg or Broad Run VRE station, listen up! Because you could be in for some big rewards.

Thanks to a program called NuRide, and a pilot program supported by VRE along with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT), commuters who share the ride to either station can qualify for gift certificates to Home Depot and countless other major retailers.

Here's how it works: VRE riders who are interested in sharing a ride to either the Broad Run or Fredericksburg VRE station can sign up online at [www.nuride.com](http://www.nuride.com) (click on "join

today"). Then, enter the promotional code "VRE-HD-07" and indicate exactly when and where you want to go. Once the database has enough entries and matches can be made, NuRide will then contact passengers and provide all of the necessary rideshare information. Then, every time a shared ride is completed, all of the people who shared the ride log in to their account and indicate that they shared a trip. Once the shared ride is made and logged in, each participating passenger will earn a \$25 gift certificate for Home Depot. Every ride after that, they'll get

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### Upcoming Dates

April 4  
Online Forum  
12:00 noon

April 11  
Meet the Management  
Union Station  
All Evening Trains

April 18  
Meet the Management  
L'Enfant  
All Evening Trains

April 25  
Meet the Management  
Crystal City  
All Evening Trains

May 2  
Meet the Management  
Alexandria  
All Evening Trains



VRE Update is a publication of Virginia Railway Express. The newsletter is published bi-weekly 24 times per year. Stories included are for the sole use of VRE riders and its supporters. Comments and questions may be directed to VRE Customer Service at [gotrains@vre.org](mailto:gotrains@vre.org) or at (703) 684-1001.

# Share a Ride to VRE

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100 more points, and they can start receiving more rewards with other companies.

To make the program even easier to use, regular commutes can be ongoing, so you don't have to enter commute information every day. Prospective ride sharers can also specify whether they're looking for someone else to do the driving, or if they're willing to take one, two, three or even more passengers with them.

The pilot program will run until June 29, and depending on its success, we will consider expanding it to all VRE stations.

"Now that NuRide has a VRE-specific program through this promotion, we're hoping that many of our passengers will gain some benefits from it," explained Ann King, VRE's manager of market development. "We're losing parking spaces in Fredericksburg, and the Broad Run lot is overcrowded. This is a great way to avoid the parking crunch and earn rewards in the process."

Users of the program will see some similarities to airlines' Frequent Flier programs, but with NuRide, you get rewards a lot faster, particularly since they relaxed the requirements for those commuters taking public transit. The bottom line goal, the company explains, is to get cars off the road and encourage more people

to ride share and/or take public transit. Every time someone uses NuRide, they're taking a car off the road, and in the case of VRE passengers, ride sharing also means they'll be using one less parking space at a VRE lot that can then be used by another person, who will then also take public transit to work. It's a snowball effect that improves road congestion and air quality for everyone.

Another benefit of NuRide's online system is that it allows prospective ride sharers to specify exactly the types of people with whom they'd like to share rides. They could say, for example, that they want to ride only with non-smoking females who have

excellent safety ratings. (NuRide's system allows riders to rate drivers, much like online auctioneer eBay allows purchasers and sellers to rate how smoothly the transaction went.) The system also ensures that members have more familiarity with their fellow riders; unlike slug lines, where everyone's identity is a mystery, NuRide requires that every member have an e-mail address through work or a university, which gives everyone some level of confidence that their fellow ride sharers are who they say they are.

For more information about NuRide, visit [www.nuride.com](http://www.nuride.com) or call Ann King at 703.684.1001.



## *To Participate in the NuRide Program*

1. Go to [www.nuride.com](http://www.nuride.com) and click on Join Today.
2. Enter promotional code VRE-HD-07 and setup your NuRide account.
3. From your NuRide trip calendar, select Plan a Trip.
4. Once your trip is planned, select Find Match\*.
5. When you have taken your trip, log back into your NuRide account and confirm your trip to earn your Home Depot Gift Card.

\*Because this program is new, it may take some time for enough riders to sign up and create a database for ride sharing.

# FRC & Step-Up Proposals

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“This decision will cut our costs by two thirds,” explained VRE CEO Dale Zehner, “but it also serves what our Board felt to be a reasonable compromise between what our passengers were telling us and what our budget was telling us.” Most importantly, extending this requirement to 60 minutes from 30 minutes does not create a disincentive for on-time performance. The fact is, if a train arrives just six minutes behind schedule at its final destination, we consider it late. This change is solely designed to cut costs while still providing the goodwill benefits of our FRC program.



The proposal to increase the Amtrak Step-Up fare from \$2 to \$10 is a bit more tricky. In response to the feedback from those who use this program, VRE has asked Amtrak to lower their fee. If they agree to reduce their fee to us, we'll, in turn, reduce the Step-Up fare and simply ask that our passengers pay us the same amount we pay Amtrak.

As soon as we can reach an agreement with Amtrak, we'll let you know, so please stay tuned! The change is scheduled to go into effect on April 30.

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## What Will BRAC Mean to VRE?

Big changes are coming to the Fort Belvoir and Quantico military bases thanks to “BRAC,” or the Base Realignment and Closure plan set out by the U.S. government in 2005. With those changes could come some pretty big changes to Northern Virginia's roads and rails.

The Army, Marine Corps, Department of Defense (DOD), Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT), local jurisdictions and VRE are working together to make sure the changes won't mean teeth-gnashing gridlock for I-95 commuters.

Most recently, Fort Belvoir released its environmental impact statement that addresses their plan for the approximately 22,000 incoming personnel, including an alternative to utilize the Engineering Proving Grounds (EPG) located just west of I-95 to accommodate nearly 18,000 of those jobs. Quantico, meanwhile, is looking to locate approximately 3,000 people associated with Defense

investigative agencies west of I-95 with an additional 2,000 people possible.

Needless to say, 27,000 more people in our already dense area means that everyone is taking a serious look at transportation options, and VRE has been a part of those conversations from the beginning.

“From a general perspective, VRE could be a very viable option for absorbing some of the new employees,” said Christine Hoeffner, VRE's manager of planning, “particularly since both bases have indicated that about 60 percent of their current staff live south of each installation.” Fort Belvoir staff live primarily in southern Fairfax and Prince William Counties and points south, while Quantico staff live primarily in Stafford and other communities to the south. They expect future employees to establish themselves along the same patterns. Given that VRE service runs along those southerly routes, we

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### *Changes to Union Station*

In order to accommodate the new security measures at Union Station, Amtrak Police will change foot traffic patterns, effective April 16, 2007.

VRE passengers must use the main doors into the station at Gate G to get to Metro. The diagonal doors will no longer allow traffic to enter the upper platforms. Customers must now use the main station concourse to get to Metro.

In addition, a barricade between Tracks 16 and 17, will restrict the flow of traffic across the upper platforms. VRE riders, arriving by Metro, must now go to Gate L, located at the opposite end of the station (near McDonalds) to access the lower level platforms. Access through Gate G (by the ladies restroom) will not be permitted.

Allow yourself a little more time to follow the new foot traffic patterns.

## Safety Sense

For many of us, iPods and cell phones have become appendages of necessity. It is therefore, a good idea to occasionally remind oneself that these items are, for better or for worse, devices of distraction. Just as anything that causes a distraction, they can be a factor in slips, trips and falls. As a simple reminder, when boarding, moving about the train, or detraining, please refrain from using these devices. Not only will you be able to hear what is going on around you, but you will have your hands free to catch yourself should you stumble.

## Courtesy Corner

Please remain seated until the train has actually departed the station prior to yours. Not everyone is physically able to stand on the train for several minutes as the train approaches their station. Do not stand at the doors unless your stop is the next one coming. Everyone wants to get to where they are going as much as the next person, so show some patience and some courtesy to your fellow riders.

# Planning For BRAC

Continued from page 3

fully expect that VRE, as a transportation option for these employees, has the potential to offset a number of the vehicle trips that would be generated by these two bases.

The biggest question right now, Hoeffner explained, is that both Fort Belvoir and Quantico have not yet defined how they foresee their employees traveling between VRE stations and their work site. With the VRE station located at the eastern edge of Quantico, and development slated for the western side of the base, some sort of shuttle service would be critical to its success. Similarly, the closest VRE stations to Fort Belvoir are Lorton and Franconia/Springfield, but neither station is immediately adjacent to the Main Post or the EPG ... meaning that connecting transit would again be necessary. Another critical need is sufficient parking at the southerly VRE stations on the Fredericksburg Line—stations that are already near or at capacity.

BRAC law requires that the personnel be relocated by 2011, and while that sounds like a long time to work these issues out, it's anticipated that these details will be hammered

out in the next six months to a year so that there will be time to design and build the facilities for these 20,000+ people.

“VRE is working with the Army, Marine Corps and the many other government agencies throughout the entire process,” Hoeffner added, “to ensure that we can identify comprehensive solutions to address the impact that this kind of base expansion will have on our region’s transportation systems, including transit. We’re also expecting that the Army and Marine Corps will look at creative ways to mitigate vehicular trips and spread out the commuter load.”

“The most important aspect of so many agencies and organizations working together,” Hoeffner concluded, “is that the right hand really does know what the left hand is doing. It’s been a very positive experience with everyone talking to one another, and although this BRAC is a challenge to us all, I’m confident that our overriding goal is to determine the best way to support the Marine Corps and Army while ensuring that our existing operations and passengers are served as well.”

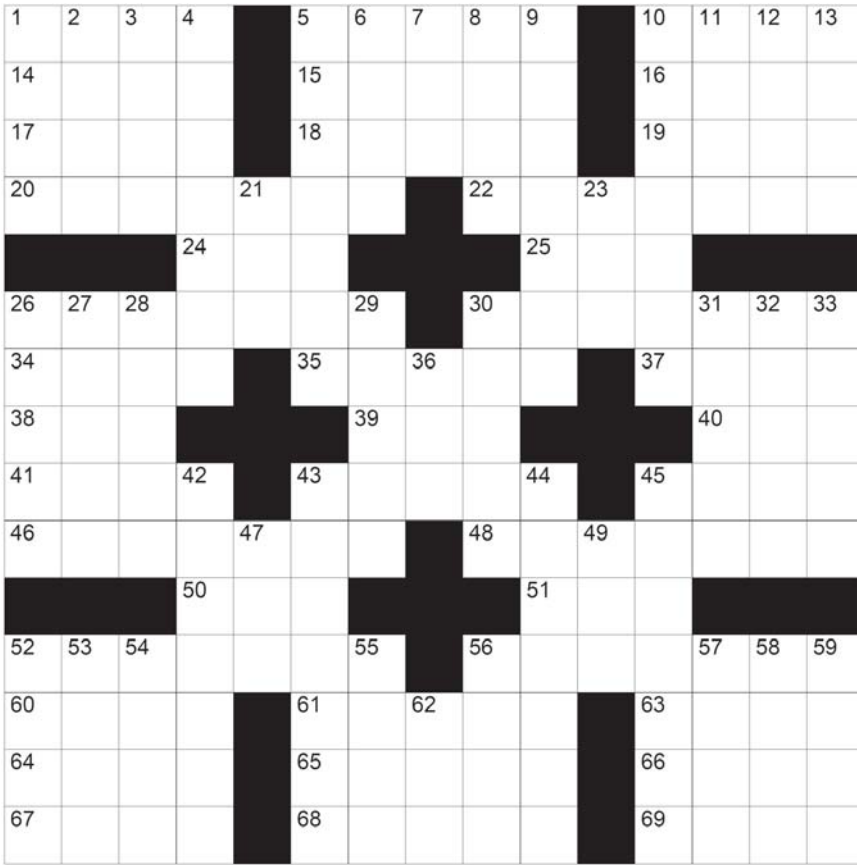


## Picture of the Week

The Quantico Bridge finished ahead of schedule and within budget.



# Crossword Puzzle of the Week



## ACROSS

- 01. The Crimson \_\_\_
- 05. Lieu
- 10. Shellfish
- 14. Lyric poems
- 15. Orchestral instrument
- 16. Ore deposit
- 17. Source of protein
- 18. Vehicles for Huck
- 19. Seep
- 20. Sausages

## DOWN

- 22. Boatmen
- 24. Computer key
- 25. Command right
- 26. In a way, separated
- 30. Make right
- 34. Woe is me!
- 35. Fountain drinks
- 37. Fly alone
- 38. In a \_\_\_
- 39. Dry, as in wine
- 40. Winken, Blinken and \_\_\_

## ACROSS

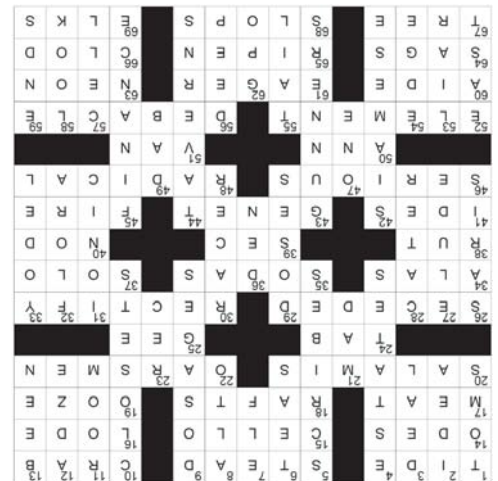
- 41. \_\_\_ of March
- 43. French playwright and novelist
- 45. Shoot a gun
- 46. Grave or somber
- 48. Extreme
- 50. Actress Margaret
- 51. Type of truck
- 52. Oxygen or copper, for example
- 56. A resounding defeat
- 60. Assistant

## DOWN

- 01. Gobblers
- 02. Notion
- 03. Lets Make a \_\_\_
- 04. Assets at death
- 05. Copyists
- 06. PM drinks at the Ritz?
- 07. Santa's helper
- 08. Palo \_\_\_
- 09. Amounts of medicine
- 10. Cupboards
- 11. Space for movement
- 12. Used to cut and shape wood
- 13. A Has \_\_\_
- 21. Angry
- 23. Play room, for short
- 26. Indian garb
- 27. Evade
- 28. Provide food
- 29. Medications
- 30. Slender fast-moving N American snakes
- 31. Greek column style

- 32. \_\_\_ and Fauna
- 33. Swiss cry
- 36. Lair
- 42. Type of cat
- 43. Artillerymen
- 44. Public houses
- 45. Obtain or provide money for
- 47. Smallest whole number
- 49. Pat gently
- 52. Indiana is \_\_\_ of Illinois
- 53. Prevaricator
- 54. Rim
- 55. The posterior part of an animal's body
- 56. Extreme in degree or quality
- 57. Any small compartment
- 58. Perceive with attention
- 59. Finishes
- 62. Central mail bureau

- 61. Impatiently desirous
- 63. Bright light
- 64. Droops
- 65. Mature
- 66. Dolt
- 67. Corner
- 68. Splashes
- 69. Moose



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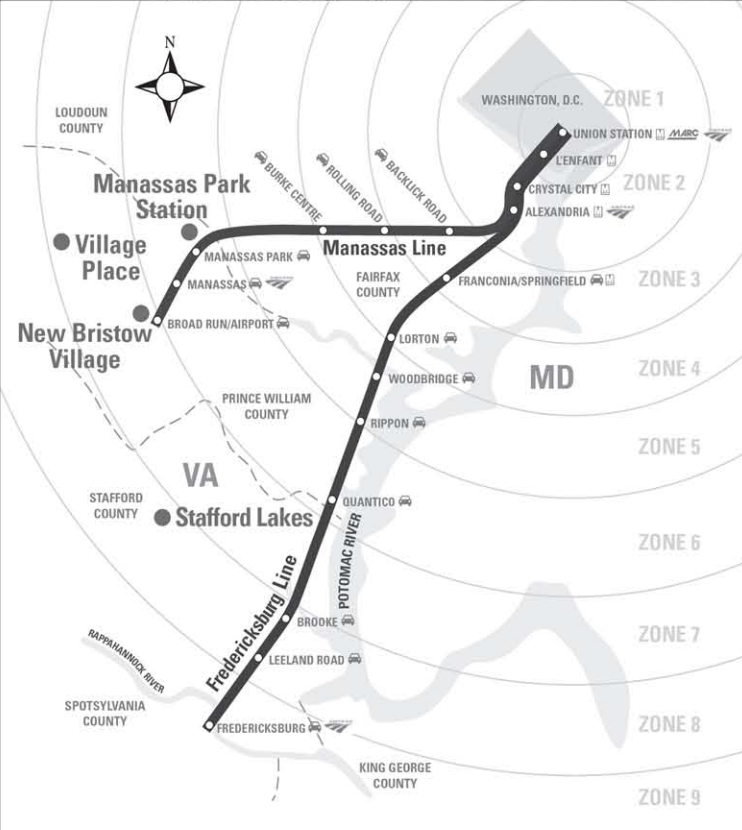


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