



VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

Update



703-684-1001

www.vre.org

February 7, 2007

Editor's Note:

For being such a short month, there is a lot going on in February!

As riders at Burke Centre already know, Phase II of the garage construction has begun. We strongly recommend that riders use the satellite lots and shuttle buses. Parking is filling to capacity by 7:00a and those "creating" their own spaces may be towed.

Fredericksburg line riders have been watching the Quantico Bridge construction for many months. Now, we are ready to "cut in" the bridge. This will take several phases to complete. However, after the first two phases in February, the new bridge will be available for train traffic! Keep an eye on our website for updates!

Four of our new cars are in service. We plan on replacing the remaining single level cars throughout this month.

While cold weather is here, we are looking forward to spring and the completion of several of our major projects. Until then, keep warm!

Public Hearings Scheduled

FRC Elimination, Step-Up Fee Proposals To Be Discussed

Two recent proposals by VRE have resulted in a lot of buzz amongst riders: the proposal to eliminate the on-time service guarantee and the proposal to increase the step-up fee for Amtrak users from \$2 to \$10. Both topics will be covered at a series of five public hearings, scheduled to begin in February.

In addition to the public hearings, interested parties can also comment via e-mail (publiccomment@vre.org), via U.S. mail (send your comments to **Public Comment**, VRE, 1500 King Street, Suite 202, Alexandria, Virginia 22314) or via fax (703-684-1313, attn: Public

Comment). All comments must be received by March 2, 2007.



"We recognize that our proposal to eliminate our on-time service guarantee has not been a popular idea," said VRE CEO Dale Zehner, "but what a lot of people don't realize is that by eliminating the guarantee, we're not creating a huge disincentive for on-time performance. The fact is, if a train arrives six minutes behind schedule at its final destination,

we consider it late ... while the service guarantee, and the resulting Free Ride
Continued on page 2

PAC Kicks Off to Lively Start

VRE has found a proven recipe for a great time: mix equal parts committed passengers, attentive staff, hot topics and good food. It's a combination that resulted in a fabulous discussion and gave both passengers and staff a tremendous opportunity to share insights and opinions.

It all happened thanks to VRE's new Passenger Alliance Coalition (PAC), an idea we first floated last fall by asking people to consider joining the coalition so that we could together find solutions to VRE's most pressing challenges. Meeting for the first time in late January, the group of 12 riders from both lines and a smattering of different stations had a lively

discussion about a wide variety of topics important to the future health of VRE.

"I was honored that these committed and passionate people were willing to share their time with us," said VRE CEO Dale Zehner, "and we covered a lot of hot topics on the minds of our riders today, particularly the proposal to eliminate Free Ride Certificates (FRCs) for late trains and to increase the Amtrak step-up fee. The program allowed all of us to hear each other's side in an intimate setting, allowing for true dialogue and 'give and take' than what larger, more formal settings allow. It gave us a

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Public Hearings This Month

Continued from page 1

Courtesy Corner

Commuting isn't always the highlight in one's life, but at least in doing so one should be able to sit, relax and rest. If you bring stuff with you, keep it with you, put it under your seat, or in the overhead racks. Don't take up another person's space. We all work hard, we all deserve our rest, whenever we can get it.

Certificates (FRCs), only cover trains that are 30 minutes or more late. So this proposal has nothing to do with incentives for being on time—rather, it has everything to do with costs in terms of distribution and administration. The program is incredibly staff-intensive to run—exacerbated whenever FRC exchanges need to be conducted—and its cost is at this point outweighing the goodwill benefits.”

“The good news is, our on-time performance rating is currently very good,” Zehner added, “and we're working hard to keep it there. We're also optimistic that the crushing time delays we have historically experienced on the Fredericksburg line during summer heat restrictions will be largely mitigated this summer with the opening of the second track on the Quantico Bridge.”

Should the on-time service guarantee be eliminated, it will go into effect at the start of VRE's 2008 fiscal year, July 2, 2007. Carriers of valid FRCs, however, will be able to continue using them until their expiration date.

The Amtrak step-up fee increase was proposed mainly to more fairly balance rider costs and VRE costs. Currently, the fare from a VRE passenger who rides a VRE train helps pay for far more than just the operation of that train. The fare also helps cover other operational costs, such as construction costs for our stations and

the lease and maintenance of our parking lots. On the other hand, the Step-Up fee of a passenger who rides an Amtrak train goes entirely to Amtrak, yet that passenger still uses the same stations and parking lots as the VRE-riding passenger. Therefore, the increase in the Step-Up fare reflects not only what VRE must pay Amtrak, but it will also eliminate the need to subsidize Amtrak-riding passengers and thereby allow us to use all of the rider's VRE

DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Thursday, February 15	Fredericksburg City Hall City Council Chamber Room 715 Princess Anne Street Fredericksburg, VA 22401	7pm to 9pm
Wednesday, February 21	V.R.E. Offices 1500 King Street, Suite 202 Alexandria, VA 22314	Noon to 2pm
Thursday, February 22	Manassas City Hall City Council Chamber Room 9027 Center Street Manassas, VA 22110	7pm to 9pm
Friday, February 23	Holiday Inn [L'Enfant] "Saturn & Venus" Room 550 C. Street, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20024	Noon to 2pm
Wednesday, February 28	P.R.T.C. Board Room, 2nd Floor 14700 Potomac Mills Road Woodbridge, VA 22192	7pm to 9pm

fare for our other operational costs that are currently not being covered by that fare.

If the Amtrak step-up fee proposal is approved, it will become effective April 30. Unlike the on-time service guarantee, which would go into effect at the start of VRE's fiscal year, this proposal would need to go into effect earlier because the amount VRE pays Amtrak is based on ridership numbers gleaned from a rider survey. We would therefore need to have enough time to conduct another rider survey before the start of the next fiscal year, assuming that there would be some changes in the number of people choosing to ride Amtrak if this proposal goes forward.



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 or at (703) 684-1001.

Quantico Bridge Cut-In Begins

Phase I Schedule Changes Start Next Week

We've been talking about it for a long time, and at last, it's here! Beginning February 12, VRE and CSX will begin signal testing and "cutting-in" the new Quantico Bridge track with the existing track, a process that will result in schedule disruptions. The schedule changes—necessary in order to properly test the track and signals—are outlined in detail on the Quantico Bridge page of VRE's Web site (www.vre.org/service/q-bridge/q-index.html).

Each of the four phases of the "cut-in" process will take approximately one week, with varying

degrees of delays depending on the type of work being done during that phase. As a result, it is critical that riders using the Fredericksburg line check the site daily so that they can plan their commutes accordingly.

VRE will be at many destination stations this week to answer questions. We will also provide regular updates about Quantico Bridge schedule changes through our e-mail newsletter, Train Talk.

Phase II for Burke Centre Garage Started

Use Shuttle Buses, Especially for Later Trains

February 5 was a banner day for the Burke Centre garage project, as the next major phase of the project began: the contractors have sectioned off a large portion of the existing parking lot where the garage will be located, and the construction site has officially encompassed the entire "footprint" of the new garage. This phase of construction is expected to last approximately 14 months.

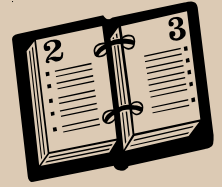
On that same day, a new, temporary lot on the east side of the station opened, along with a temporary "Kiss & Ride" area. Passengers who want to use the new parking lot and the drop-off area will need to drive past the construction site in order to reach the new lots; directional signs have been posted, and a diagram of the entire area can be found at <http://www.vre.org/service/stations/burke-phase2-plans.pdf>.



More supplemental parking can be found off-site, with 108 spaces at the future Burke Library site (Fairfax County Parkway at Freds Oak Road), and 100 more spaces at St. Mary's Church (Zion Drive at Sideburn Road). Both of the off-site lots are served by the EZ Bus shuttle. At press time, there are no plans to change the bus schedules, but if the construction process necessitates adjustments, VRE will notify riders via its Web site, VRE Update and Train Talk.

Temporary lights are also going to be installed at the new lot and the "Kiss & Ride" area, with VRE working with Fairfax County in order to provide a safe level of lighting.

Once this major phase of construction is completed, a series of smaller phases—such as building access roads and paving a small parking lot on the west side—will complete the project.



Upcoming Dates

Wed., February 7
Quantico Questions at Union Station and L'Enfant

Thu., February 8
Quantico Questions at Crystal City, Alexandria, and Franconia/Springfield

Mon., February 12
Quantico Phase I Begins
Train 301 Cancelled

Thu., February 15
Public Hearing
Fredericksburg

Mon., February 19
Presidents' Day
No VRE Service

Tue., February 20
Quantico Phase II
Limited Schedule Begins

Wed., February 21
Public Hearing
Alexandria

Thu., February 22
Public Hearing
Manassas

Fri., February 23
Public Hearing
L'Enfant

Wed., February 28
Public Hearing
Woodbridge

PAC Meeting

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Safety Sense

Parking lots are not international raceways. Whether you are backing up, pulling in, or driving through, be on the look out for people in every direction. If you're zipping around a lot at top speeds, an accident is bound to occur. Then think of the time you'll really lose.

The same goes tenfold during winter weather. People are driving about with windows still fogged. Slick spots dapple the ground from frost, rain, and snow. You want to be able to stop on a dime, and driving slowly will be the only way to do that. In wintry conditions, give yourself that extra bit of time. Never be in a hurry. It's hard to be careful when you're in a hurry.

chance to really listen to rider comments and dig deeper into other issues, while it gave our riders a chance to better understand how we look at issues and try to make informed decisions. It was an education for everyone, and I hope it demonstrated our commitment to customer service and our interest in listening and learning.”

The PAC plans to meet quarterly, with frequent dialogue by e-mail in between meetings. With fairly even representation from all service areas, VRE is not currently looking for additional members, but we'll

certainly consider adding more if the need arises or if any members have to drop out. Stay tuned!



New Cab Cars on Four VRE Trains

Last week, the fourth cab car was added to our fleet. These cars feature wider entry doorways and steps leading into the car, a more spacious



handicapped seating area with adjacent luggage storage area and a 2-2 seating arrangement that eliminates middle seats. These new cars replace the single level Mafersa cab cars in our fleet,

with all Mafersa cab cars removed from service by the end of February. At the end of this year, more of these new cars will enter service, supplementing and replacing other older equipment in the VRE fleet.

The new cab cars are on the following trains:

Manassas Line

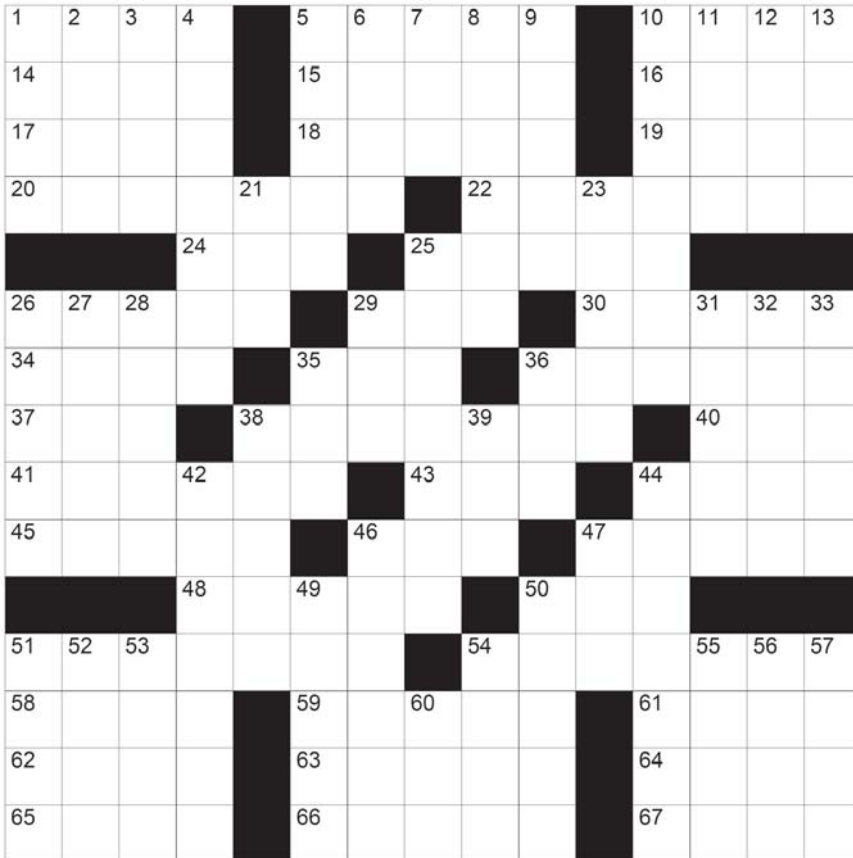
- 324 (departing Broad Run at 5:45a)
- 328 (departing Broad Run at 6:40a)
- 331 (departing Union Station at 5:00p)
- 333 (departing Union Station at 5:30p)

Fredericksburg Line

- 306 (departing Fredericksburg at 6:35a)
- 308 (departing Fredericksburg at 7:15a)
- 305 (departing Union Station at 4:05p)
- 311 (departing Union Station at 6:00p)

Crossword Puzzle of The Week

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ACROSS

- 01. In addition
- 05. Pork and veal
- 10. Radar echo
- 14. Factory
- 15. Temporary absence or cessation of breathing
- 16. Assistant
- 17. Brew made of fermented honey

- 18. Canines and molars
- 19. Glance over
- 20. Larger than normal for its kind
- 22. Frostiest
- 24. Also
- 25. African country
- 26. An assembly of witches

- 29. A partially opened flower
- 30. Respond
- 34. Scent
- 35. Before
- 36. Wickerwork
- 37. In the center
- 38. Sweet talk
- 40. PM drink
- 41. Eskimo boot

- 43. Debutante, for short
- 44. Prejudice
- 45. With great haste
- 46. Small mass
- 47. Ecuadorian monetary unit
- 48. Oak tree seed
- 50. ___ diem
- 51. Type of pasta

- 54. Setting down of an airplane
- 58. Breastplate
- 59. Devil
- 61. Spoken
- 62. Car
- 63. Elude
- 64. Arrive
- 65. Academic administrator

- 28. Liquor
- 29. Undergarment
- 31. Garret
- 32. Not cloudy
- 33. Taunt
- 35. Moose
- 36. Network
- 38. Con game
- 39. Beak
- 42. Contact
- 44. Cocklebur
- 46. Feel sorrow for
- 47. Monetary unit of Japan
- 49. Belonging to a time long past
- 50. Jury
- 51. Take in a book
- 52. Flu
- 53. Life: Lat.
- 54. Vein of mineral ore
- 55. Press
- 56. Appellation
- 57. Happiness
- 60. Mouth

DOWN

- 01. Bullets, for example
- 02. Place
- 03. Thin strip of wood
- 04. Senior citizen
- 05. Unleavened bread
- 06. Fencing sword
- 07. Saturated hydrocarbon: Suff.
- 08. Group of four
- 09. Respectful address for a European man in colonial India
- 10. Medieval steel helmet
- 11. Head parasite
- 12. Belonging to Ms. Lupino
- 13. Closely confined
- 21. Charged particle
- 23. Eel
- 25. A reward or payment
- 26. A punctuation mark
- 27. Abhorrence

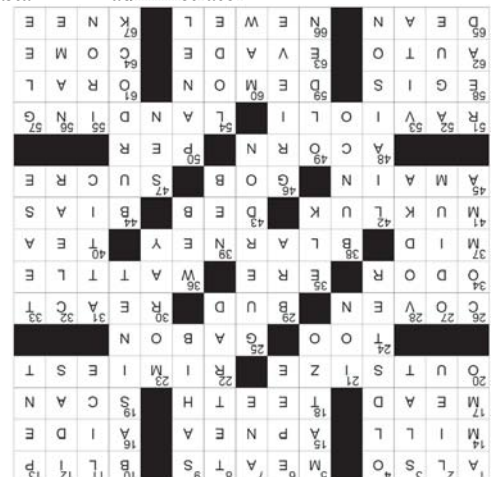
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Stafford County

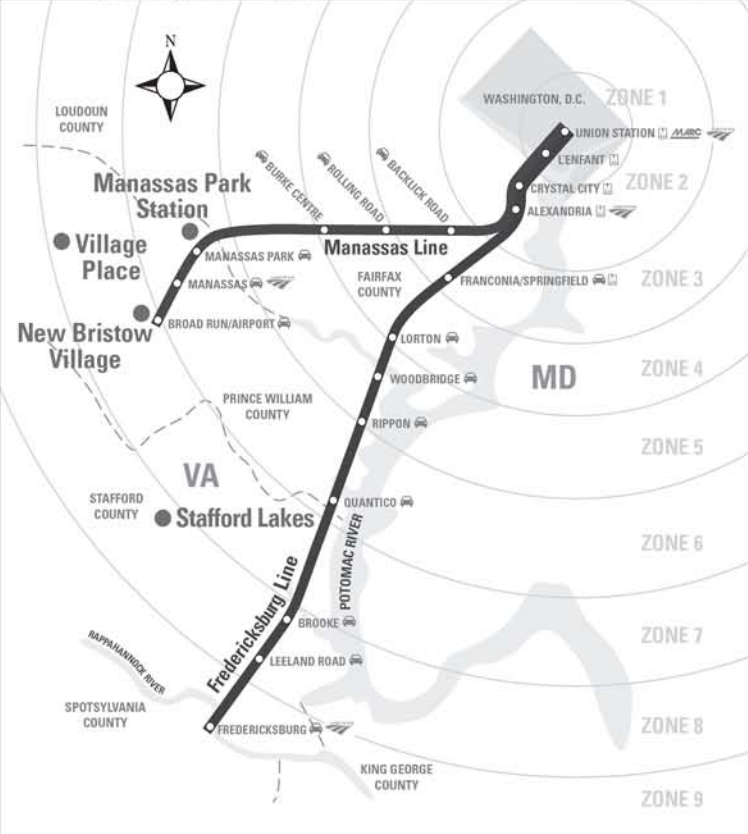


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