



VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

Update



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Goin' Loco Without More Locomotives

Editor's Note:

We're having an anniversary! VRE is turning 15 years old this summer. We have been planning some great ways to celebrate and hope you will join us in making this year a memorable year.

Despite our age, we have had some growing pains along the way. The two biggest changes riders will notice this summer are to the FRC and Step-Up Program. Visit our website for details.

Even still, we want to thank you for keeping us moving. Without you, our loyal riders, VRE would not be what it is today. As we celebrate our anniversary, we are keeping in mind that it is you that we are really celebrating.

VRE's locomotives are the workhorses of the fleet, racking up countless miles over the 15 years that VRE has been in service. Some are in great condition, some need preventive maintenance; and some, others may argue, should be put out to pasture. But until VRE gets more locomotives in the fleet, retirement isn't an option ... and the result can be



m e c h a n i c a l breakdowns and slowdowns that are the bane of any commuter train's existence.

VRE is seeking to avoid that scenario

with a locomotive acquisition program in place that could mean getting three new locomotives in 2009 and up to 17 more over the following few years.

In the short term, we will lease three locomotives. Although all the paperwork hasn't yet been finalized, VRE is hoping to have them in hand and fully operational by the first of September 2007.

"Riders always want to know which line will get the new ones," said Dennis Larson, VRE's director of rail equipment and services. "With two rail lines, locomotives flow constantly back

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Third Track to be Installed at L'Enfant

Passengers who use the L'Enfant station in D.C. may have noticed some construction work along the viaduct, and although construction can sometimes mean short-term delays, it almost always means faster service long-term. At L'Enfant, passengers will likely see the best of both worlds: no appreciable short-term delays and definite rewards in long-term better service.

What exactly is happening? The construction currently underway is all geared toward installing a 1.2-mile long third track along the viaduct in the vicinity of L'Enfant Plaza in D.C. The track and associated turnouts (switches) will ultimately allow freight trains to move from

track to track at higher speeds, thereby allowing the freight trains to clear the area more quickly. That, in turn, will allow for more capacity for passenger trains. It will also give CSX a second track on which to stage freight trains before they cross the choke point; the two-track bridge over the Potomac River into Virginia.

The third track is scheduled to be "cut-



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Upcoming Dates

- July 1
Step-Up and FRC
Changes Begin
- July 4
No VRE Service
No Independence Day
Express
- July 11
Meet the Management
Quantico
All Morning Trains
- On-Line Forum
12:00 noon
- July 18
Meet the Management
Burke Centre
All Morning Trains
- July 25
Meet the Management
Rippon
All Morning 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 or at (703) 684-1001.

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and forth between lines, so they'll end up wherever they're most useful. And they likely won't stay there very long. As our needs change, the location of the new locomotives will change too."

"The leased locomotives will be of the same generation and type as VRE's current V31, V32 and V33 locomotives, and they'll come to VRE with agreed-upon mechanical enhancements already completed."

"Meanwhile, VRE is in the final stages of putting out a Request for Proposals (RFP) to purchase 20 more locomotives. The RFP will be posted as soon as we can finish evaluating our funding sources

to determine how many we can buy with our base order. We hope that will be finalized in the next two to three weeks."



"This process is not so much an effort to determine how many we can buy," added Larson, "it is determining how many we can buy in the base order with available funding."

Regardless of what that number ends up being, VRE expects to have at least the initial order of new locomotives

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Third Track at L'Enfant

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in" over the weekend of August 11. This cut-in process, which will tie the new track in with the existing tracks, is similar to the cut-in process that took place earlier this year at the Quantico Bridge, but it will be far less onerous. Rather than requiring several 10-day phases, the L'Enfant cut-in should only require two to three days, meaning it may be completed before VRE service resumes on Monday, August 13, and almost certainly by Tuesday, August 14.

"This cut-in phase is being scheduled over the weekend, when VRE is not running, to minimize disruptions," explained Dave Snyder, VRE's Superintendent of Operations, Safety and Security. "During the cut-in process, the old signal system is removed from service, and the new signal system is tested extensively while the trains run on an old-fashioned train order

system for the one or two days that it will take to test the new signals. During the construction phase—from now through mid-August—there may be minor delays for flagmen, but nothing longer than a couple of minutes. We really expect that this won't be a major problem for any of our commuters, since everything should be back to normal by the Monday following the weekend cut-in, and certainly by Tuesday. The real rewards will be seen when the third track is fully operational and freight traffic is far less disruptive to passenger service than it is currently."



Fredericksburg Bridge Repairs Planned

The Fredericksburg railroad bridge is, to put it mildly, getting old. Built in the 1920s, the bridge has begun to show its age as crumbling concrete occasionally falls from its underside and puts those who may be walking underneath at risk.

Because VRE's Fredericksburg station and platform are built atop the bridge, it's a problem that VRE has been working to repair for some time. As with any structural repair, however, it takes time and money. The funding is coming: VRE was able to obtain \$2.6 million from the Federal government in order to begin repairs, but because the funding is spread over four years, we've needed to wait until we had amassed enough before getting started. Now that that time has come, plans are underway to start repairing the bridge.

"The focus of our investigation up to now has been what is causing the concrete to spall (flake)," explained VRE's Director of Construction and Facilities, Sirel Mouchantaf. "We've determined that the crux of the problem is drainage issues on the bridge, which has allowed water to slowly seep into the concrete and corrode the rebar (steel bars placed in concrete in order to reinforce it). As the rebar corrodes, it expands and creates cracks in the concrete. Furthermore, as water enters the cracks and then freezes and thaws through the seasons, it has loosened sections of the concrete and has caused chunks to detach and fall below. We've hired a consultant to do a condition assessment and perform material testing on the bridge to determine the overall condition of the concrete and try to predict how long it will last before it needs a major rehab or be entirely replaced."

Unfortunately, Mouchantaf explained, \$2.6 million is not enough to do a complete rehabilitation, but it is enough to repair troublesome spots and

slow the deterioration of the bridge. The next step, therefore, will be to develop detailed specifications and hire a contractor to begin work on patching and stabilizing the existing concrete and addressing some of the drainage issues.

At this point, VRE is expecting the repairs to begin in about six months, with the majority of the work being done from the bridge's underside to ensure that rail traffic is not significantly impeded during this initial phase.

"It's hard to predict exactly how long the repairs will last," Mouchantaf added, "but we're expecting that it should last at least five years. During that time, we plan to approach CSX with a proposal to rehabilitate the bridge more completely. It will likely take a few years to get that level of funding secured, so it's our intention to have the details of a grander-scale rehab worked out by the time the repaired sections need attention again."

Visitors to Fredericksburg may also have noted that the station itself has had a bit of a facelift, thanks to the City of Fredericksburg, which recently worked with VRE to oversee the repainting of the entire station. While it's more aesthetic than the bridge work, the two projects combined will surely give the Fredericksburg station a new lease on life.



Safety Sense

AED

Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) are located within a three minute response time on all of our trains (in the cab car of all trains with 5 or less cars, or in the first and fourth cars of all trains with more than 5 cars).

Prominently displayed brochure racks mounted inside all railcars carry a brochure instructing passengers to notify a crewmember immediately if they or someone near them needs help. It also describes early symptoms of Sudden Cardiac Arrest, which includes unresponsiveness, loss of consciousness, loss of pulse or loss of breathing.

For your safety and for the safety of others, please familiarize yourself with the brochure and with the location of your train's AED.

*On-Time
Performance by
Train for the month
of May 2007*

Fredericksburg Line

300 – 91%
302 – 100%
304 – 91%
306 – 86%
308 – 86%
310 – 100%

301 – 95%
303 – 82%
305 – 91%
307 – 73%
309 – 82%
311 – 82%
313 – 95%

Overall – 89%

Manassas Line

322 – 100%
324 – 95%
326 – 91%
328 – 95%
330 – 91%
332 – 100%

325 – 91%
327 – 91%
329 – 86%
331 – 95%
333 – 100%
335 – 95%
337 – 82%

Overall – 93%

*A train is considered delayed if it is more than 5 minutes later than the posted

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in its hands by September 2009. Next will be an RFP to sell the old locomotives.

“Right now, we own 17 of the 19 locomotives in our fleet. On any given day, 15 are in service, either on a train or as a spare locomotive at each location in case there’s a mechanical problem at or near departure time,” explained



Larson. “What that all means is that because the locomotive acquisition process has taken longer than we had hoped, we’re finding it difficult to sustain our daily operations while also having the ‘wobble room’ to pull some locomotives out of

service for scheduled improvements and preventive maintenance. Getting some additional locomotives in through the lease and then replacing them through the RFP will be a huge relief for everyone.”

Some of those scheduled improvements include changing out the turbo chargers and fuel pumps, replacing batteries, and installing new dynamic brake interlock drums, which in three recent instances have locked up. Although they can be manually unlocked to get the train moving again, time is lost having to do that, and delays become inevitable. With three more locomotives in hand, these improvements can be done more easily and will result in improved reliability of the older locomotives.

Overall On-Time Performance

June numbers are through June 25, 2007

