



VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

Update



703-684-1001

www.vre.org

September 6, 2007

Annual New Rider Issue

Editor's Note:

Someone recently referred to the day after Labor Day as "Traffic Tuesday." It is, indeed, a day when everyone is back to school and back to work. Every year, VRE has what it refers to as the "September Bump." Most years, we tend to see more new riders in September than most other months (Our other bump occurs in January after the holidays!).

With this in mind, every September the *VRE Update* has its annual New Rider Issue. This issue is chock full of things that riders, old and new, may find helpful as they ease their way back into the daily grind. In fact, our long time riders may want to flip to page 6 where we announce the winners of our 15th Anniversary Essay Contest. The Grand Prize winners have their essays published on pages 4 and 5.

VRE Update has long been one of our best ways to keep all of our riders informed of the latest and greatest news at VRE, but we also try to keep in mind that every day, someone may board our trains for the very first time. For those new riders, learning about all that VRE has to offer requires more than reading a bi-weekly newsletter, and so today, we're dedicating this issue to our most tender-footed passengers. But if you're a veteran rider, please don't toss this issue without a quick review ... there may be some services or reminders you've long since forgotten about.

So read on, enjoy, and remember! Whether you're a new or veteran rider, VRE's Web site (www.vre.org) is the best encyclopedia of VRE knowledge out there. Our newest riders will probably most appreciate the information located at www.vre.org/service/newrider.htm, which includes an overview and detailed explanations for topic areas such as: How much will a ticket be? What times do the trains run? How do I buy a ticket? How do I contact VRE? and How can I obtain a New Rider Kit?

Don't Lose Hope on Lost Items!

If you've lost something on one of VRE's trains, chances are excellent that you'll get it back ... and that's just as true for basics like umbrellas and jackets as it is for valuables like PDAs, laptops and monthly tickets. Certainly a key reason for this is that our riders are an extraordinary bunch who turn in an amazing amount of found "stuff." But it's also thanks to a smoothly running and very efficient Lost & Found program.

Here's how it works: the moment you realize you've lost something, fill out VRE's online Lost Item Report at www.vre.org/feedback/lostitems.php or, if you don't have Internet access, call (703) 684-1001 between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Please be sure to provide as much detail as possible to help distinguish your property from similar items. (If you lose an item on an Amtrak train, you must call 1-800-USA-RAIL to report it.)

In the meantime, VRE staff collects and tags items that are found on the trains every day. If we find an item that you have reported as missing, we will contact you with a claim number. The VRE office is located at 1500 King Street in Alexandria, second floor, and is open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.



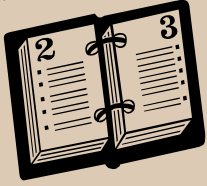
You must have the claim number and a photo ID to recover your item from Lost & Found. Items are only kept for 30 days, after which they're donated to charity. (For health reasons, *food items must be claimed by 6:30 p.m. on the day that they arrive at VRE.* All food items left after that time will be discarded.)

If you lose your ticket, the procedure is similar: First, fill out the online Lost Ticket Report at www.vre.org/feedback/losttickets.php, or call

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In Case of Emergency:

Guaranteed Ride Home is There



Upcoming Dates

Wednesday, Sept. 12
On-Line Forum
12:00 noon

Monday, October 8
Columbus Day
No VRE Service

Monday, November 12
Veterans' Day Observed
No VRE Service



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.

One of the biggest obstacles to getting people to take public transit regularly is working around their fear that they might someday be “stranded” should an emergency come up. What if, for example, you unexpectedly had to work past your normal quitting time, and you’ll miss the last train. Or, a child falls ill at home and you need to get home moments after you arrived at work ... when there aren’t any trains running in the direction you need.

It’s a stressful situation, and VRE understands that sometimes people really need to travel during off-peak hours, no matter what the train schedule says. Thanks to a regional, cooperative effort called the “Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program, there is indeed a “safety net” in place that will guarantee you a ride home in the case of family illness, unscheduled overtime or an unusual emergency.

The program is free and available to all VRE passengers. The ride is paid for in full by GRH up-front, with no reimbursement by the commuter necessary. For those passengers living more than 40 miles away, a cab or a rental car may be made available, but the mode of transportation to get you home is ultimately up to the GRH customer service representative.

There are a few things to keep in mind when using GRH:

1) To qualify for the GRH program, you must be pre-registered with the Council of

Governments (COG). (Un-registered commuters can use GRH one time, but you must then register before you are eligible to use GRH again.) You will be asked to state your normal work hours (i.e., 9-5, 7:30-4:30, etc.) on the registration form. To get a copy of the registration form mailed to you, call 1-800-745-RIDE. Or, visit the GRH Web site at www.mwcog.org/commuter/ccindex.html.

2) The GRH program does not cover gratuities paid to cab drivers.

3) To qualify for an emergency ride due to unscheduled overtime, your supervisor must be available to confirm authorized overtime.

4) As soon as you know that you will have unscheduled overtime, call Commuter Connections at 1-800-745-RIDE to schedule your ride. Please call as early as possible. (You can call any time before, but no later than, your normally scheduled quitting time. Additionally, the operator will need to speak to your supervisor to confirm authorized overtime.)

5) The program operates from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. on weekdays. It generally will not run in severe weather or on holidays.

For more information, please call 1-800-745-RIDE or visit www.mwcog.org/commuter/ccindex.html.

We'll get you home. Guaranteed.

It's 4:00. Do You Know Where Your Train Is?

With VRE's Rail Time You Do!

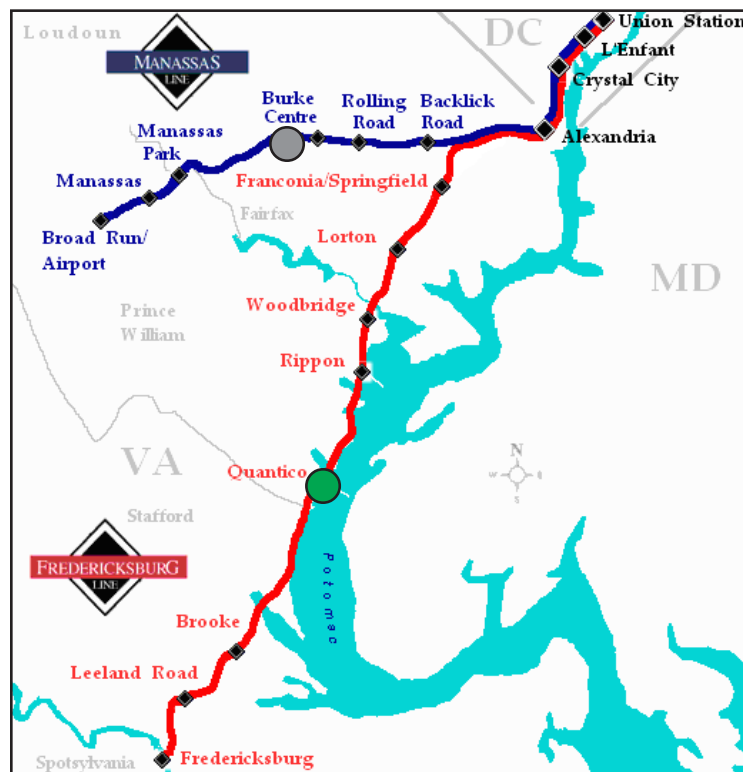
Wondering if you have a few minutes to spare before dashing out of the office? Waffling between pouring another cup of java or just running out the door in the morning? Then log on to www.vre.org/vremap/app?action=ovmap, or click on the "Rail Time Update" button on our home page, and check out VRE's real-time train tracking service, Rail Time! The Global Positioning Satellite (GPS)-run program shows current train location and its status (on time or delayed). You can even zoom in to see exactly where the train is located, down to the general street level.

Using GPS systems onboard to plot the location of the train, each train transmits its location, one each minute, via its onboard GPS system to VRE's central location in Alexandria. The information is then disseminated to VRE's Web server, where it is automatically updated on users' screens.

Figuring out the exact location of your train is very easy. Once at www.vre.org/vremap/app?action=ovmap, users will see a map of both the Manassas and Fredericksburg lines. During commuting hours, visitors to the site will also see green, red or gray circles that represent the trains. If it is "green," the train is on time; if it is red, the train is late; and if it is gray, the train has temporarily lost communication with VRE. By placing your mouse over the colored circle, a pop-up box will appear with the train's number, its status, and a timestamp indicating the date and time the train last communicated. And, if you

click your mouse directly on the train's icon, you can zoom in to a more detailed map of the selected train's location.

Sometimes, trains are tracked manually, meaning that a conductor reports in from the train rather than relying on GPS technology. In that case, riders will need to visit VRE's online "train status" page, located at www.vre.org/vremap/app?action=showstat, for service information. Additionally, all browsers may not support the pop-up feature that Rail Time offers. In that case, users should also visit the train status Web page (www.vre.org/vremap/app?action=showstat) for an update on the status of trains scheduled to be in operation at that time.



VRE's Rail Time helps you know exactly where your train is.

Safety Sense

A few weeks ago, we had a tragic event unfold before our eyes when someone on the tracks near Alexandria was hit by a freight train. Over the years, we have seen many of our passengers walking along the tracks or crossing the tracks when the warning lights begin flashing. Not only is this considered trespassing on private property, but it is extremely unsafe.

To put the matter in perspective: Consider a gnat that hits your windshield as you are driving. Now imagine that you are the gnat and any freight, Amtrak or VRE train is your car. The visual isn't pretty. Play it safe and stay out of harm's way.

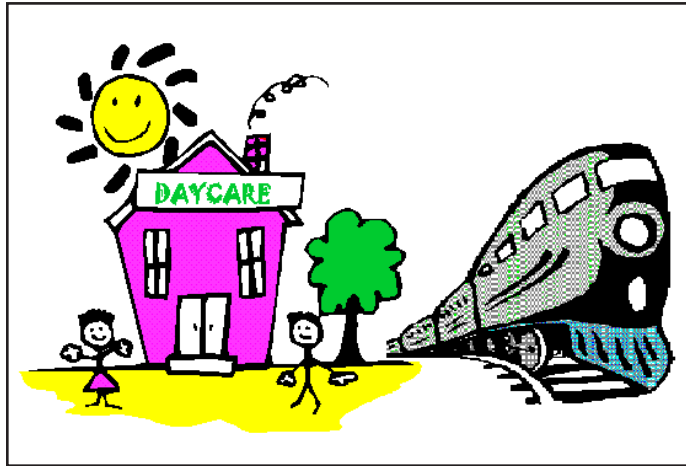
Daycare's Clock is Ticking...

15th Anniversary Essay Contest Grand Prize Winner

VRE means more family time for me. I commute from Spotsylvania to Ft. Belvoir every day and my son, Brennan, is my commuting partner. I am incredibly fortunate to have a day care within minutes of my work. This means that I get to spend my commuting time with my son instead of in traffic or alone. If we did not have the option to ride the VRE, I would miss out on about 3 hours a day with my son. Brennan is now eight and a half months old and loves riding the train. He flirts with all the pretty ladies and even smiles at the kind gentlemen that give him a minute of their time to say hello. He is so much fun and loves the people and interaction. I will always be able to tell my son that we rode the train together while he was young. The conductor on our train, Bruce, is such a pleasant man that always takes the time to stop by and talk to Brennan. Thank you, VRE and thank you, Bruce.

Marnie Grace

If we're running late, you're most likely running late. And if you have children at a daycare that charges a dollar for every minute you're late, those extra minutes can add up fast. But don't let that stop you from riding VRE, because VRE cares about being on-time just as much as you do. So much, in fact, that VRE will take care of any extra late fees for childcare due to our tardiness.



VRE's "Security Blanket" policy is a guarantee that if you take a VRE train that is scheduled to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to your

daycare's closing, we will get you to your station within 15 minutes of the scheduled arrival time. If we don't, we'll reimburse your daycare late fee. Sound easy? It is. And you can use this service up to four times each year.

In order to take advantage of this program, simply fill out the "Security Blanket" form at www.vre.org/programs/securityblanket.htm. Then, mail it to VRE along with a copy of your

daycare late fee receipt and a copy of your ticket. Within 30 days, we'll mail you a check. You won't see this kind of guarantee from I-66 or I-95!

VRE Guarantees On-Time Performance

VRE is one of only three transit agencies in the nation that guarantees its on-time performance, and by that we mean that if a VRE train enters a station 60 minutes or more behind schedule, passengers detraining from that point forward are entitled to receive one "Free Ride Certificate" (FRC) good for a FREE one-way trip on VRE.

Crews typically issue FRCs onboard the affected train the same service day of the delay. (Should you not receive an FRC when they are handed out on the train, please speak to a conductor before you detrain.) If FRCs are not handed out on the train at the time of a qualifying delay, all requests will be handled by mail using VRE's FRC Request Form, which can be downloaded at www.vre.org/programs/freeride.htm.

Redeeming an FRC is easy: just like a single-ride or ten-trip ticket, FRCs must be validated in the platform ticket vending machines (TVMs) prior to boarding and then displayed on the train for inspection by a conductor.

Passengers can also request an FRC for trains that were cancelled (and where FRCs were not handed out on the next train that same day). To do so, send a completed FRC request form along with a copy of your valid ticket to VRE, 1500 King Street, Suite 202, Alexandria, VA 22314, or via fax at (703) 684-1313.

Now, if only we could get our gas tanks refilled for free when we sit in endless traffic jams on our local highways ...

Keep on Top of Things with Train Talk

Staying in the loop has never been easier at VRE, thanks to our Train Talk e-mail newsletter service that ensures that subscribers will always have the most up-to-date, accurate commuting information possible.

The e-newsletter, which is sent to our subscribers on an as-needed basis, keeps everyone current on schedule changes, service disruptions, seat notices and other news. If a switch goes down and slows rail traffic, you'll be warned about it. If an elevator goes out of service at one of our stations, you'll know about it. If a train is running late, you'll know why it's running late, and you'll get periodic updates as to when things are moving smoothly again.

We also e-mail press releases, announcements and other materials as soon as they can be made available to the public.

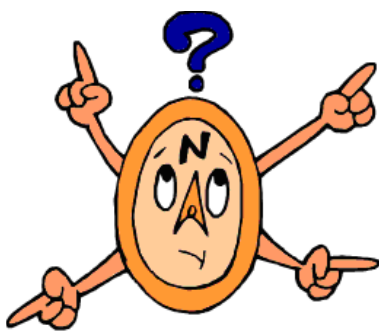
Best of all, you can tell us exactly where you want us to send Train Talk so that you can access it wherever it's most convenient—at home, at work, by PDA or by phone—so no matter where you are, you can find out how your commute is shaping up. You can even customize the news you receive, so that if you ride the Manassas line, you won't get updates about the Fredericksburg line ... and vice versa.

Subscribing is easy ... visit <http://traintalk.vre.org> to register.

Lost and Found

Continued from page 1

(703) 684-1001 to report a lost ticket. If your ticket is found, we will contact you and make arrangements to return it to you. Ten-Trip and Single-Ride tickets will be mailed to your home address, and Monthly tickets will



be given to the conductor of your evening train. If you lose a Monthly ticket that is not found within 48 hours of reporting it missing, you are eligible for a replacement ticket. Simply call us again to confirm that the ticket was not found, and we will deliver a new Monthly ticket to you. If you lose a TLC ticket that is not found within 48 hours of reporting it missing, you are eligible for a replacement for the portion of the ticket that provides travel on VRE. Please

visit www.vre.org/service/vretlc.htm for details. (Proof of purchase may be required, so please retain your receipt when purchasing your TLC ticket.)

To help ensure you're one of the lucky ones, try these suggestions: 1) Always print your name and daytime telephone number on the front of your ticket, 2) Try not to keep other people's business cards in your ticket holder, especially if your name and number is not on the ticket, and 3) Do not keep other valuables, like Metrocheks, other tickets, or your Drivers License, inside your ticket pouches. The higher its value, the more tempting it may be for someone to take your ticket rather than turn it in.

VRE will always do its best to recover lost items and tickets, but we are not responsible for them. You must have a valid ticket prior to boarding a VRE train, so it is your responsibility to purchase a new ticket to use until the missing ticket is found.

*15th Anniversary Essay
Contest Grand Prize
Winner*

Broad Run, 06:15AM, usual parking spot, ensure ticket valid, climb aboard Train 326, seat in quiet car, settle in, check out sports page, depart on time, glance out window to check weather, litany of stations pass by, depart Alexandria, prepare for end of trip, step onto Crystal City platform, another day begins.

Crystal City, 3:50PM, watch Fredericksburg train depart, find waiting spot, Train 327 hits mark, find seat in cool car, check shopping list, relax, organize plans for tonight, arrive Broad Run, avoid stampede, five minutes to home, another day ends.

What VRE Means to me: convenience, comfort, consistency.

Mike Bradley

Send Us Your Feedback!

Courtesy Corner



As you gather your belongings to detrain, please remember that trash receptacles are available for your newspapers, empty water bottles, empty coffee cups, and/or any other “stuff” you no longer need. Since some of our trains provide service more than once in the mornings and evenings, we appreciate all your help in keeping the trains clean.

We say it a lot ... and we mean it. We care about your opinions, and we want to hear from you. During the summer months, we have a Meet the Management program whereby our staff visits stations during rush hour so that we can hear from you face to face. We have a rider advisory board. We host online forums with our CEO so that he can answer your questions directly. Yet still we want more.

If you ever want to tell us something—compliment or criticism, we’re not picky—please contact our customer service department by e-mailing gotrains@vre.org or by calling us at (703) 684-1001.

We also have four different online forms that address specific problems in our trains, at our stations, with a ticket vending machine (TVM) or with vandalism such as graffiti. If, for example, you notice a problem onboard, such as a P.A. system that was garbled, a train that was too hot, or your cupholder was broken,



please fill out the train information form at www.vre.org/feedback/mechanicalconcerns.php. Similarly, if you see a problem at one of our stations, i.e., lights that are out, snow or dirt that needs to be removed, or a P.A. malfunctions, please complete the station information form at www.vre.org/feedback/stationconcerns.php. If a TVM is not working properly, you can report it at www.vre.org/feedback/tvmconcerns.php, and if you see any vandalism at any of our stations, please let us know via www.vre.org/feedback/vandalismconcerns.php. In all four cases,

we’ll send you an e-mail regarding the matter within five business days of receiving your online report.

Of course, if you don’t have access to the Internet, calls to (703) 684-1001 are always welcome and appreciated. We look forward to hearing from you!

15th Anniversary Essay Contest Winners!

In June, we asked you to tell us what VRE means to you in 100 words or less. Nearly 100 of you took the challenge. The judges have met and decisions have been made! Two grand prizes were awarded to Marnie Grace on the Fredericksburg Line and Mike Bradley on the Manassas Line. Their essays are printed on pages 3 and 4.

We also have 15 essays that deserved an Honorable Mention. These essays will be printed in the Update over the next several months.

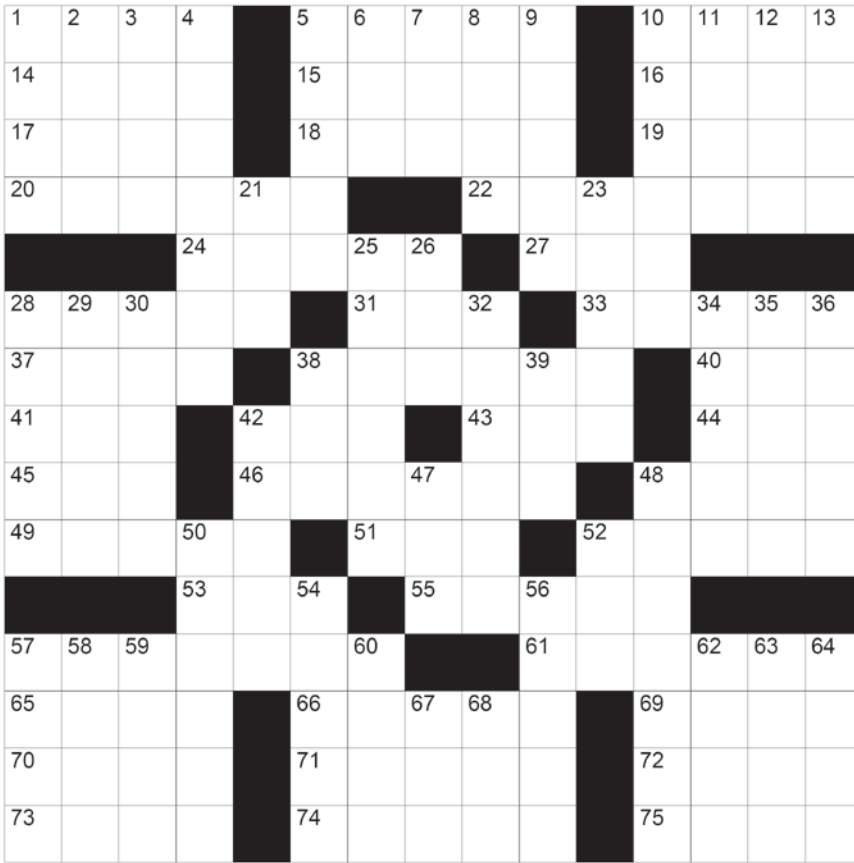
Congratulations to:

Nicole Leamond
Laurie Nevarez
Julie Kay
Patti Vause
Mike Young
Stephanie Brinley
Bonnie Gray
Bob Walter



Jay Bapple
Tricia Levy
Lori Hanton
Vanessa Chapin
Kath Messick
Eileen M. Daniels
Jane Wicker

Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

- 01. Slaloms
- 05. Veal, lamb and pork
- 10. A French clergyman
- 14. Monetary unit of Italy
- 15. Overturn
- 16. Cover with liquid
- 17. Any division of quantity accepted as a standard of measurement or exchange
- 18. A person who deceives

- 19. Japanese beverage
- 20. Protest against a policy
- 22. Earned
- 24. Massive animal of SE Asia and Africa
- 27. Hairpiece
- 28. Binge
- 31. Perform
- 33. A light informal meal
- 37. Expression of sorrow or pity
- 38. Producing no result or effect

- 40. Regret
- 41. 007's creator, ___ Fleming
- 42. Surgical rooms: Abbr.
- 43. The ___ of La Mancha
- 44. Before
- 45. Liquefied natural gas: Abbr.
- 46. Patched
- 48. A horizontal bar of wood
- 49. Trapshooting
- 51. Spring mo.

DOWN

- 01. Speak hurriedly
- 02. Domesticated bovine animals
- 03. Eye part
- 04. Ironies
- 05. Civilian dress
- 06. Environmental Protection Agency: Abbr.
- 07. Request
- 08. To swarm
- 09. Scatter
- 10. Allocate
- 11. Small; for travel on water
- 12. A way to cook
- 13. Supplemented with difficulty
- 21. Female person
- 23. Came up
- 25. Extreme disgust
- 26. Fall mo.
- 28. Cruises
- 29. A stout length of sawn timber
- 30. Kitchen appliance
- 32. Clocks
- 34. Regions

- 35. Radioactivity unit
- 36. Staggerers
- 38. Weekday: Abbr.
- 39. Small boy
- 42. Selected
- 47. Acct.
- 48. Food for service personnel
- 50. Newspaper supervisor
- 52. King or queen
- 54. Orchestral instrument
- 56. The meaning of a word or expression
- 57. On top
- 58. Number of lives for a cat
- 59. Pier, side of porch
- 60. A means of access
- 62. Helen of ___
- 63. Biblical garden
- 64. A measured portion of medicine
- 67. Indian city
- 68. Naturally disposed toward

- 52. First, second, third and home
- 53. Winter month: Abbr.
- 55. Any valuable or useful possession
- 57. Unsupported
- 61. Revised
- 65. One half a quart

- 66. Boston's airport
- 69. Church booklet
- 70. Upon
- 71. Nooses
- 72. Negative votes
- 73. Close by
- 74. Speak
- 75. Auld lang ___

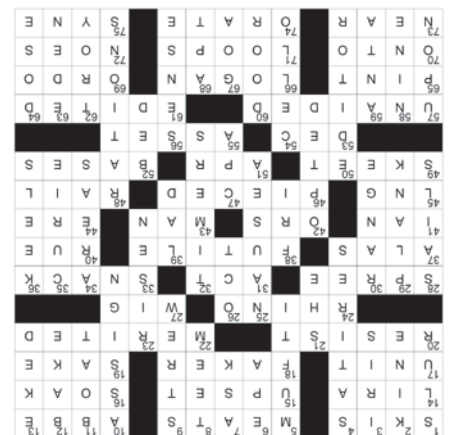


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WE SHOULD DO THIS MORE OFTEN.



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