



# VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

## Update



703-684-1001

[www.vre.org](http://www.vre.org)

April 30, 2008

### *Editor's Note:*

A really big day is coming. Our top article hints at what is to come. At press time, we were 90% of the way towards a plan to deal with the signal suspension that will definitely affect service on Friday, May 30. We are working with CSX, Amtrak, and Norfolk Southern and will announce plans by the end of this week. Stay tuned for details!

Despite one day of a planned service disruption, good things are coming this summer. The Burke Centre and Manassas garages are on schedule to open this summer. While we wait for them to open, the Burke Centre trails are ready to go, offering nearby residents the option to walk to the station. Read more on page 2.

With more and more of our new Gallery cars coming into service, summer will be cooler than ever. For some, too cool. An explanation of the new HVAC system is included in this issue.

## Mark Your Calendars for May 30 Service Disruptions

We hate talking about service disruptions, but if we have to, we prefer the kind that we can plan for rather than the kind that blindsides all of us.

And on Friday, May 30, we know that we'll experience a big one, and we want to share it with you as soon as possible, so that you can prepare for it or, if possible, make alternate arrangements.

What's going on? CSX is in the process of installing a third track between "RO", an area just south of the Potomac River Bridge, and Slater's Lane, an area just north of the Alexandria station. The third track is just about completed, and in order to tie it in with the existing track, CSX needs to run a series of tests and conduct signal suspensions to ensure that everything is working perfectly before

opening it to regular railroad traffic.

CSX has determined that for this project, they will need a total of three days and three nights ... which means they can't complete everything over the weekend. So, they will begin the process after service on Thursday, May 29, and complete it Sunday, June 1. On Friday, May 30, it's a safe bet to say that rail traffic will be disrupted, and we are going to have to make some changes to our service that will be very significant, affecting both the Manassas and Fredericksburg lines.

We are in the final planning stages now, and we will keep riders updated as we finalize schedules. Please stay tuned via our Web site ([vre.org](http://vre.org)), our e-newsletter Train Talk, and VRE Update.

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## Brrrr, It's Cold! Or Is It?

The new Gallery cars in VRE's fleet have been getting lots of thumbs up for comfort, cleanliness, seating and signage. But some riders, particularly those who tend to ride on the upper level, have complained that the new cars' HVAC system seems overly motivated, and the result is chilly arms and goose bumps.

What's up with the cooling system? Well, in short, if you brought your own personal thermometer on board, you'd find out that it's actually not cold. It just sometimes feels that way, thanks to the chill factor of constantly moving air.

much like what are found in today's luxury cars, rather than separate "heat" and "air conditioning" systems. In other words, they are designed to keep air temperatures between 68 and 72 degrees at all times, and they don't really know or care what season it is. So, depending on factors such as exterior temps and humidity levels, the "air conditioner" cooler could theoretically kick on in winter to balance the heat, while the "heat" could kick on in summer if the air got overly dried out. Each car has two 12-ton units, so that each end of each car is controlled independently of the other half.

Let us explain: First off, the systems in the new Gallery cars are actually climate control systems,

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### Upcoming Dates

Wednesday, April 30  
Meet the Management  
Franconia/Springfield  
All Evening Trains

Wednesday, May 7  
On-Line Forum  
12:00 noon

Wednesday, May 14  
Meet the Management  
Fredericksburg  
All Morning Trains

Wednesday, May 21  
Meet the Management  
Broad Run  
All Morning Trains

# Brrrr, It's Cold...

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“Sixty eight and 72 degrees are colder than most people set their systems at home,” admitted Dennis Larson, VRE’s director of rail equipment and services, “but with 140 people in a car, setting it closer to 76—which most people do at home—would be stifling. The 68-72 degree range is standard for passenger railroads across the nation.”

So the real issue is that the air inside the new gallery cars is constantly on the move, and it’s that air flow, as anyone who has ever been outside on a windy day can attest, that makes some people feel a little chilled.

“When we purchased these cars, we specified a certain air exchange rate in order to ensure that fresh, filtered air from outside is brought in all the time,” Larson explained. “And in order to achieve that exchange rate, these blowers need to run with a certain strength and velocity at all times, with the heat or air conditioning cutting in as required.”

The air from the blower travels out of a square tube that runs length of car, near the luggage

racks, and then shoots out each side of that tube horizontally. To keep it from hitting people in the side of the head, a diffuser is set on each side of the tube that intercepts the horizontal air and channels it vertically. The air that is diverted downward serves the lower deck, while the air that is diverted upward hits the ceilings and curls down the curved ceilings, along the windows. So, people who are seated next to the window tend to feel a breeze on their right or left shoulder, depending on which side of the car they’re sitting on.



“It’s that wind chill that people are feeling, as it makes the effective temperature feel colder than it actually is,” said Larson. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution: if we set the thermostats higher, anyone who isn’t in the direct line of the air flow will feel uncomfortably hot ... and then we’d be inundated with complaints about people being hot. The best solution for those sitting in the upper deck next to the window is to keep a jacket or light sweater on, or, if you’re particularly sensitive to it, sit on the main deck. The way things are designed now really is the optimum we can achieve with these cars.



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.

## Burke Centre Walking Trails Open

Residents of Burke Centre have long strived to live up to their community motto, “Nature in harmony with community,” and with the recent opening of two pedestrian trails leading to the Burke Centre VRE station, they’ve once again successfully made their community a more livable—and walkable—place.

It all started, Supervisor Sharon Bulova remembered, back in 2003, when VRE’s Burke Centre parking lot was overcrowded, sometimes up to 120 percent over capacity. Officials at Fairfax County proposed to build a garage at

that location to alleviate the situation, and while VRE riders were surely happy about the proposal, the surrounding communities weren’t so thrilled. Fearing that it would be visually unappealing and would only create more traffic in and around their neighborhoods, they made it clear that they would fight the proposal.

In the hopes of avoiding a potential showdown between commuters and neighbors, Supervisor Bulova assembled a meeting with representatives

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# Burke Centre...

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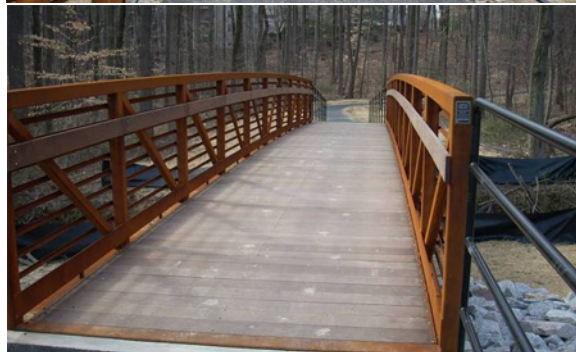
from all interested parties, including representatives from the affected communities.

“I communicated the need for the new garage, but I invited residents to play a very active role in its development,” Bulova said. “Three task forces resulted from that meeting—the first assisted with the design of the garage; the second worked on logistical issues, such as finding temporary satellite parking during the construction phase; and the third worked on making pedestrian trails a part of the overall plan to ensure that nearby communities could be connected to the VRE station via pedestrian paths.”

From a clean air point of view, the third task force’s goal was a worthy one: the cold start of car engines, combined with short trips, is one of the biggest sources of automobile pollution. And the idea of linking public transit to neighborhoods also made a great deal of sense, providing more capacity for people to walk or bike to the station instead of only providing more capacity for people to drive.

“All three task forces shared a happy ending,” Bulova added. “The garage was designed with the community’s input, and it’s a lovely facility. It’s a green building in many ways, with terraced vegetation one of its most prominent features. The logistics group successfully found satellite parking opportunities and ensured that an

existing farmers’ market could continue to operate throughout the construction phase, and Little League fields also remained open throughout. And finally, two beautiful new trails have been opened that connect two neighborhoods with the station.”



*Views of the new Burke Centre walking trails.*

Dedication of the two trails, scheduled for 11:00 a.m. on May 10, are named after the communities that are now connected to the VRE station; the Berkshire Commons Trail heads south from the station, and the Walnut Woods Trail heads east from the station. Both feature wide asphalt pavement and a series of bridges over low-lying land.

The trails were funded primarily by Fairfax County bond referendums, and early reaction to the trails has been very positive.

Kevin Morse, a Burke Centre resident and involved member of the trails committee, admits that he’s far more excited about the opening of the trails than he is of the garage.

“I believe in getting nearby users to the station by alternative methods—such as walking, biking or by the EZ shuttle bus—rather than driving. As a result of these trails, two large communities in Burke Centre now have direct access to the VRE, and that’s significant. I hope that everyone living in the Woods or the Commons seriously considers using these trails, all of which are quite substantial and built to very high County specifications.”

## *Safety Sense*

We have seen many instances of our passengers crowding along the edge of the platform as the train approaches. Many of them are standing on the yellow tactile edge as the train is coming into the station. This is a dangerous practice as it leaves no margin for error. Passengers not only need to stay BEHIND the yellow tactile edge to ensure their safety. In fact, they should stay WELL BEHIND the line.

Standing back may not get you on the train first, but it will ensure that you will be around to board more trains in the future.

# Calling All First Day Riders

## Courtesy Corner

Do you know where your shoes have been? Chances are that you know exactly where they have been, your just don't really think about it that often.

If you have been walking in any parking lot, even a VRE one, your shoes have probably trucked through motor oil, pesticides, dirt, and all of that lovely green pollen. Let's not even think about what you may have picked up as you walked on public restroom floors!

The fact of the matter is that when you put those shoes on our seats, you leave behind invisible (and sometimes visible) yuck! Do us, the seats, and your fellow passengers a favor, keep your feet on the floor. Save stretching out for your couch, where you can slip off your shoes and really get comfy.

Do you remember the days when riding VRE meant having your choice of seat ... for yourself and for your brief case? When you could take a class during your commute, with a live instructor riding the rails with you? When there was no such thing as a Quiet Car?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you just might be the person we're looking for! In celebration of our upcoming 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we're looking for riders who have been with VRE since day one. Our plan is to spotlight some of our veteran riders so that you can share your experiences; tell your best/worst/funniest/goofiest memories of what you've witnessed/experienced/

personally done over the years while onboard; or find out what it is about VRE that has earned your loyalty for so long.

So, if you're willing to admit that you've been riding VRE for 16 years, please let us know by e-mailing us!

What? You don't know our e-mail address? Hmm ... seems you should after all these years. But okay, okay, here it is: e-mail [gotrains@vre.org](mailto:gotrains@vre.org) with "first day rider" in the subject line. We can't wait to hear from you!

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## Spring Gallery Walk in Old Town Manassas

The annual Spring Gallery Walk in Old Town Manassas has been scheduled for Friday, May 2 from 6:00PM until 9:30PM. Various merchants will be hosting artist receptions throughout Old Town, serving refreshments and the opportunity to meet the artist in person, and discuss their work. You can follow the balloons to find the various stops on the Walk, or pick up a Gallery Walk map at any one of them. You can also download the map from Historic Manassas Inc.'s

website calendar at [www.visitmanassas.org](http://www.visitmanassas.org). This season's Gallery Walk is proud to exhibit the work of two talented Brentsville High School students, Cierra Dobson and Sompaseuth Chounlamany.

Directions and complete Spring Gallery Walk information can be found at [www.manassasgallerywalk.com](http://www.manassasgallerywalk.com). For information on this and other Old Town events, visit the Historic Manassas, Inc. website at [www.visitmanassas.org](http://www.visitmanassas.org).

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