



VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

Update



703-684-1001

www.vre.org

December 17, 2008

VRE to Run Special Inauguration Day Trains

Editor's Note:

New Year's has long been seen as a time of change. While we are not making any New Year's resolutions this year, there are a lot of things going on this January. Fare and schedule changes are occurring on January 5 (page 3). Metrocheks are also changing over to SmartBenefit vouchers (page 2) and our S&I building is nearly ready to go (page 5).

The biggest news is Inauguration Day! That phrase seems to be on everyone's mind these days, especially in the Greater D.C. Metro area. It certainly has been a hot topic here at VRE. We have finalized the basics of our Inauguration plans. Our website is now up with all of the information available. Tickets went on sale on Tuesday, December 16.

Finally, from all of us at VRE to all of you, we wish you a happy and safe holiday season.

Witnessing history has just gotten easier, with VRE's recent announcement that they will be operating full-service trains on Tuesday, January 20, 2009, for the inauguration of President-Elect Barack Obama.

To help you plan your trip aboard VRE, please keep the following details in mind:

1) VRE will run its full-service schedule, but will move its two mid-day trains (#325 on the Manassas line and #301 on the Fredericksburg line) to better coordinate with the day's events. Those trains will run at 1:30pm and 1:45pm, respectively. Our regular reverse-flow Manassas trains will also not be accepting passengers. In the event of poor weather, passengers should look to the same media resources as usual for service updates, including our own Web site and the TrainTalk e-newsletter, although our goal is to run our full schedule no matter what Mother Nature throws at us.

2) Regular VRE tickets will NOT be accepted. Passengers who would like to ride VRE on Inauguration Day will need to purchase special, advance-sale tickets. The

Round-Trip tickets will cost \$25 per person, regardless of where you board or detrain, and tickets will be required for ALL passengers, lap babies included. Discount rates for groups, youth or seniors will not be available.

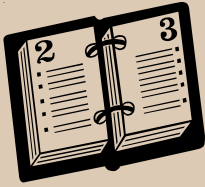
3) Tickets will go on sale on Tuesday, December 16th and will be available until they sell out. Ticket sales will be handled through the VRE office only. An order form will be posted on December 16th at



www.vre.org, which passengers should print out, complete and mail to VRE's offices with their payment to 1500 King Street, Suite 202, Alexandria, VA

22314. Those without access to the Internet can call VRE's office at 703.684.1001 and request that a form be mailed to them.

4) Expect extra security, large crowds, and busy parking lots. Patience will serve you well!



MetroCheks Days are Numbered

Upcoming Dates

Wed., December 24
Christmas Eve
“S” Schedule

Thu., December 25
Christmas
No VRE Service

Fri., December 26
No VRE Service

Mon., December 29
“S” Schedule

Tue., December 30
“S” Schedule

Wed., December 31
“S” Schedule

Thu., January 1
New Year’s Day
No VRE Service

Fri., January 2
“S” Schedule

Mon., January 5
Regular Schedule
Resumes, New
Fredericksburg
Schedule and
New Fares Take Effect

Mon., January 19
Martin Luther King,
Jr. Holiday
No Service

Tue., January 20
Special Service for
Inauguration Day

As we reported in the October *VRE Update*, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) switched from Metrocheks to SmartBenefits vouchers on December 1, 2008. These new paper transit subsidies do not have magnetic strips on the back and cannot be used in the Metrorail system. However, the new vouchers, available in \$1, \$10 and \$30 denominations, can be used to purchase VRE fare just like Metrocheks. VRE will also honor the vouchers with the ticket vending machine (TVM) reimbursement program that we have for Metrocheks. In essence, VRE will treat the paper vouchers exactly as we treat Metrocheks; they’ll just look different.

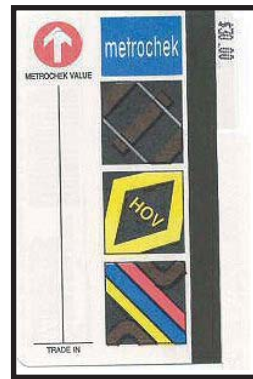


Because many agencies purchase paper transit subsidies months in advance, many riders who work at agencies with quarterly benefits may find that they continue to receive Metrocheks beyond the December 1 cut-off date and may not see a conversion to paper vouchers until sometime in February or March. As a result, VRE will continue to accept Metrocheks through March 6, 2009. After March 6, 2009, however, VRE (and its vendor network) will only accept the SmartBenefits vouchers.

Those who have already signed up for electronic transit benefits through CommuterDirect.com will not be affected by this change to the paper version of fare subsidies. Those commuters can continue to work through the SmartBenefits electronic program to have their fares managed electronically, and have their tickets mailed directly to their homes or offices. Tickets can continue to be picked up in-person at CommuterDirect.com’s Commuter Stores, as well as from the Mobile Commuter Store,

which will be set up at a location near the VRE L’Enfant Station one day a week (Tuesdays from about 9:00 am to 2:00 pm). Riders should contact CommuterDirect (703-228-7433) for details.

If you are unsure whether your employer is switching to SmartBenefits vouchers (paper) or SmartBenefits (electronic), please contact your Human Resources Department for clarification on which type of benefit your agency/employer is using.



To further help clarify things, VRE will be updating our Web site with information about these changes in the near future. In the meantime, we are happy to help you out through by phone at 703.684.1001 and email at gotrains@vre.org.

And for those of you wondering why on earth WMATA is doing this in the first place, the short-term goal of this conversion is to help eliminate the possibility of fraud—a major problem for WMATA and for employers. Long-term, a region-wide conversion to electronic benefits (and the total elimination of paper benefits) will eventually enable all commuter transit systems to share the same type of fare media, such as the SmarTrip cards. WMATA is currently projecting a date in 2010 before their system can be ready for the region.

Changes Coming January 5

Schedules and Fares to Change

Tickets

In addition to ringing in a New Year, the beginning of January will also serve as the time that VRE's new fares will take effect. The fare increase was necessary in order to cover increases in total costs that VRE has recently had to incur, including yearly increases in insurance costs, a recently settled Amtrak labor dispute, locomotive maintenance, and unstable fuel prices.

The new fare table is available online at www.vre.org/service/fares/mid-year-fares.html.

Schedules

There will also be a slight schedule change on the Fredericksburg line, which we hope will improve the consistency of our on-time performance (OTP) for this heavily used rail line. While the total tweaks will only result in changes of up to about four minutes at any one station, we are hoping the schedule will now be more accurate.

Why the change? VRE staff, along with CSX and Amtrak representatives, reviewed

10 months worth of service data, paying particular attention to pure run times and busy stations that tend to have longer "dwell time" (the amount of time a train sits in a station while passengers board or detrain). By adding minutes for stations with larger crowds and shortening the dwell time for lesser-used stations, we are hoping to more closely match our schedule with reality, therefore improving our overall OTP on the Fredericksburg line. Of course, even the most precise schedule cannot predict or address other circumstances, such as a disabled trains or broken switches, but we hope to at least update our schedules to reflect today's ridership patterns.

Should this process prove successful, we will then conduct the same review process on the Manassas line in the spring and make any necessary tweaks to that schedule, as well.

The revised Fredericksburg schedule is available at www.vre.org/service/schedule.htm.

Special Inauguration Day Websites

To help you plan your visit, below are several online links that provide the most up-to-date details about the day's many scheduled events:

- Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies:
<http://inaugural.senate.gov/>

- Presidential Inauguration Committee
www.pic2009.org

- DC Government:
www.inauguration.dc.gov/index.asp

- DC Tourism:
www.washington.org/visiting/experience-dc/presidential-inauguration/information

- Metro (WMATA):
www.wmata.com/getting_around/metro_events/inauguration.cfm

- VRE
www.vre.org/Inauguration09/main.html

Picture of the Week

Mr. and Mrs. Claus take a moment to relax to during VRE's 13th Annual Operation Lifesaver Santa Trains.



Where Does My Fare Go?

Toys for Tots: Thank you!

Thank you to every one who contributed to the Marine Corps Toys for Tots program.

We gathered approximately 650 toys and collected \$7600 dollars for deserving children who might otherwise not have had a Christmas.

It's been a lean year and times have been tough, so those who contributed to this important program should know that their gifts were especially generous.

We thank you all for helping give back and we wish everyone a wonderful, happy and healthy holiday season.

People from every corner of the world are watching their pennies, as the economic crisis has truly gripped the globe. It's only natural, then, to start questioning where your dollars are going, and with commuting costs on an incline, we suspect that you just might be wondering where exactly *your* VRE fare goes.

So, we're here to tell you. First and foremost, rest assured that your fare money is not going to fund executive retreats to sunny climes. Rather, 100 percent of the ticket fares goes toward VRE's operating expenses, and unfortunately for us, fares only covers 55 percent of those costs. By operating expenses, we mean things like fuel, crews to operate the trains, access fees to Norfolk Southern and CSX for using their tracks, maintenance and cleaning of locomotives and rail cars, communication with passengers and train dispatchers, the operation of our central office, the operation of station message signs, maintenance and repairs to stations and parking facilities, information technology, and safety and security.

Not surprisingly, there are other major areas that are not lumped under the operating expense category, such as insurance (\$5 million per year); principal and interest payments on borrowed funds; and the capital program which covers things such as improvements to yards and stations, the purchase of new rail cars and locomotives, and other items that improve what we already have and that allow us to build the capacity of our system and make it more efficient.

Looking at our adopted fiscal year 2009 budget, which took effect July 1, 2008, our entire budget comes in at \$74 million (capital and operating), with fare income budgeted at \$21.4 million. Clearly, fare income is a very important source of revenue, but it doesn't come close to covering our total expenses. To make up the shortfall, we look to funding from the Commonwealth of Virginia, the

federal government, and participating jurisdictions. We also see some income from interest on investments and advertisements in our stations.

While fuel costs are going down right now, they're not what they used to be, and we fully anticipate that they will go up again in the future. Given that we use approximately 1.8 million gallons of diesel fuel a year, each dollar increase in fuel means a \$1.8 million increase for us. To further

help our budget and the environment, we're working to reduce usage through improved efficiencies—the new locomotives, for example, will be much more efficient than our old ones—but in the meantime, what we use is what we use and pay for.

Our budget and fares are under constant scrutiny, with a mid-year fare increase approved by the Board and set to go into effect on January 5 (our budget year runs from July to July, so January is considered mid-year). Our 2010 budget will reflect conservative estimates on how much support we can count on from local, state and federal coffers, given the budgetary woes in virtually all areas of the economy. Meanwhile, a large percentage of our costs, such as the access payments to Norfolk Southern and CSX and our payments to Amtrak for operating the trains and maintaining the equipment, include annual contractual increases.

"No matter how much we cut expenses, our total costs continue to go up because of contractual commitments, and there's only so much funding that we can get from cash-strapped local and state governments," pointed out VRE Chief Financial Officer Donna Boxer. The most recent fare increase proposal is essentially an attempt to simply cover those increases so that we can maintain current service levels. At the same time, we need to be realistic in the current environment and know that reduction of service levels is not completely out of the question ... it's going to be a delicate balancing act between revenue and service."



S&I Building Nears Completion

Since VRE's founding, we've had to rely on Amtrak's engine house in Washington, D.C., to handle maintenance jobs such as draining oil tanks and changing lube oil for all of our engines, but with the construction of a long-anticipated service & inspection (S&I) building, we're going to soon be able to handle a whole host of maintenance and service requirements, including 180-day inspections mandated by the Federal Railroad Administration—all on our own property.

The first of two S&I buildings is nearing completion now at our Crossroads rail yard, with a second to be completed at Broad Run in about another year. Both will be approximately 200 feet long, big enough for any combination of two vehicles to be worked on at the same time. They'll feature 85-foot inspection pits,

with universal jacking pads and a 10-ton overhead crane so that any size vehicle can be raised from two locations within the building. There will also be draining and storage devices for used locomotive lube oil, which is then pumped to above-ground tanks for removal by a contractor.

The buildings will house air compressors and air storage tanks that will supply compressed air to tools at the engine house, and which will also allow us to keep our trains' air brake system supplied without having to idle the engines, significantly saving on fuel usage. Outlets powerful enough to power electric welders and four 35-ton equipment jacks will also be featured. The buildings will be staffed

during weekdays and weekends in order to maintain and repair VRE's fleet without disrupting the morning and evening commuting schedule.

A trainwash has also been constructed at the Crossroads site, allowing every train set to get washed once every two weeks. When the second is built at Broad Run, train sets will be washed once a week—a big improvement over the current schedule of every two and a half months. Why is



washing so important? Yes, the aesthetics are nice, but more important is that cleanliness increases the longevity of the equipment, as built-up grime and dirt can cause equipment to corrode.

The S&I buildings have been on VRE's strategic plan for the last three years. The end result will allow us a more efficient and flexible method for handling maintenance issues as well as a long term cost savings.

It is a win, win situation for VRE.

Safety Sense:

Keep track of your belongings. It is important to keep your bags with you at the station and on the train. VRE's successful lost and found policy has been modified so that suspicious bags will be turned over to and examined by authorities and possibly destroyed.

Alert your crew to any suspicious packages on the train or in the station. Conductors can be identified by their uniforms and can be found as they walk the cars or at a station stop near open doors.

Report suspicious activity or persons to your conductors.

Innovative Hybrid Technology on the VRE?

Courtesy Corner

Even though it's been cold, we've been lucky enough to avoid any snow, or ice or freezing rain (so far!). Still, January and February are just around the corner and it's only a matter of time before we have to deal with one of the three.

Perhaps the biggest courtesy issue during this type of weather is remembering, for those riders on the upper level, not to put one's shoes on the railing.

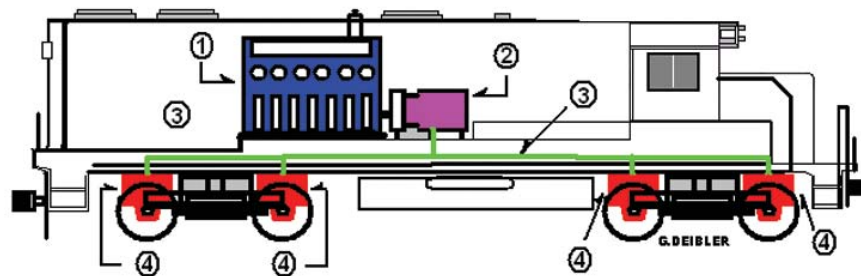
When it is snowy and wet and the bottoms of one's shoes pick up bits of mud, gravel and salt. No one on the lower level wants to be dripped on.

So please, remember to keep ones shoes firmly on the ground and try to remember not to dangle them on the poor souls below.

Most people these days are making a conscious effort to do more for the environment. One example of this is increasing number of people purchasing hybrid automobiles.

What many people don't know, however, is that

large amounts of electricity that travels down specialized cables to powerful electric motors called "traction motors." These motors are located on each axle of the locomotive. The gears of the traction motors interact with gears on each of the locomotives 4 axles. When



- ① Diesel engine that generates movement for the generator
- ② Electrical generator that generates electricity
- ③ Electrical cables connecting the generator to the traction motors
- ④ Electric traction motors that turn the axles and move the train

VRE and other railroad companies have been using hybrid transportation since the invention of the diesel locomotive, thus putting some of our more seasoned riders way ahead of the curve when it comes to clean commuting.

The movement of a train is supplied by a locomotive. All locomotives in our fleet are classified as diesel-electric. Meaning that each locomotive possesses a large diesel engine within its frame. With ratings of up to 3,000 horsepower, these engines dwarf the strength of a conventional automobile, which range anywhere from 100 to 200 horsepower.

Rather than directly providing the power to rotate the axles, as in an automobile, a locomotive's propulsion system is different. The large diesel engine rotates a crank shaft that drives a very large electrical generator. When the shaft turns from the movement of the engine, it turns a magnetized wheel within heavily coiled copper wire. This then generates

electricity generated from the generator is supplied to the motors, the gears move, transferring movement to the axles, moving the locomotive ahead, with the train in tow.

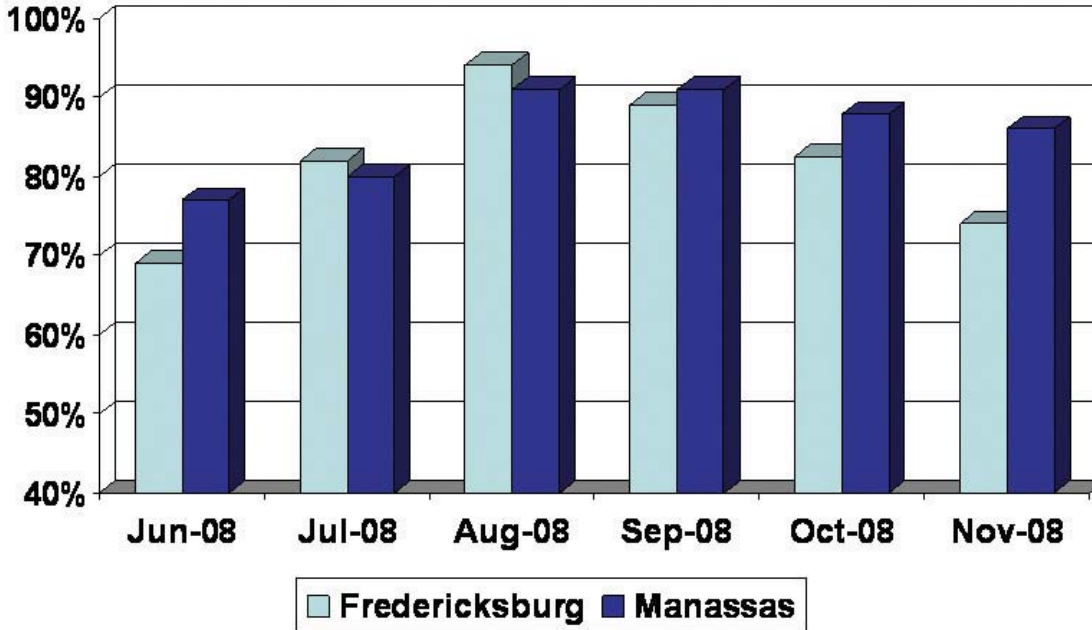
This method is very similar to that of a hybrid automobile, recently revealed as the latest and greatest invention in automotive technology.

Hybrid technology mates a standard low-emissions engine and adds an electric motor to provide some of the power to reduce emissions and improve its operating efficiency.

By commuting on VRE, you can be proud that you are helping to do your part for the environment.

On-Time Performance

Over The Last Six Months



On-Time Performance by Train for the month of November 2008

Fredericksburg Line

300 – 82%
 302 – 61%
 304 – 71%
 306 – 78%
 308 – 83%
 310 – 72%

301 – 72%
 303 – 67%
 305 – 88%
 307 – 67%
 309 – 71%
 311 – 94%
 313 – 53%

Overall – 74%

Manassas Line

322 – 94%
 324 – 83%
 326 – 88%
 328 – 61%
 330 – 94%
 332 – 100%

325 – 94%
 327 – 78%
 329 – 88%
 331 – 89%
 333 – 82%
 335 – 78%
 337 – 76%

Overall – 86%

*A train is considered delayed if it is more than 5 minutes later than the posted schedule into its final destination.



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