



# VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

## Update



703-684-1001

www.vre.org

January 10, 2008

### Editor's Note:

Ah, a new year. A time of reflection, a time of changes. The start of the year always brings a bump in ridership. New resolutions to lead a better lifestyle bring new riders to VRE. For those of you who are new, welcome aboard! For those of you who are veteran riders, be sure to keep an eye out and help get them acclimated to life in the VRE lane. We have always been proud of the way our riders have grown into a community unto themselves. Keep this tradition alive as we ring in our new year!

As we start this new year, we are also keeping an eye on events that are brewing just ahead. The years-long, protracted dispute between Amtrak and some of the railroad unions is coming to a head. It has now stalled into a "wait and see" period, but the possibility of a strike is real and can seriously affect VRE's ability to operate trains. We are closely monitoring the situation and will keep you posted as we know more.

## Possible Amtrak Strike May Affect VRE Service

A dispute between Amtrak and its eight labor unions could mean trouble for VRE's commuter service, and VRE is advising all of its passengers to stay tuned for more information throughout the month of January.

The threat to VRE service results from the simple fact that VRE's trains are operated and maintained by Amtrak crews, so if the labor unions ultimately decide to strike, those crew members will obviously not be available to run VRE's trains during the strike period.

In essence, Amtrak and all of its unions have been in negotiations over the terms of their contracts since August 2000, meaning that some contracts formally expired between seven and eight years ago. Sticking points include back

pay, contributions to health care insurance, and changes to work rules, with specific requests including: 1) Raises similar to those in the agreements ratified by the freight railroads and their unions; 2) Health care cost containment and benefit reform; 3) Work rule reform and productivity improvement; 4) No involuntary furlough of employees as a result of work rule changes; and 5) No back pay.



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## VRE's PAC Recruiting New Members

Interested in having a regular forum for sharing what's on your mind, swapping ideas and finding out why VRE makes the decisions it does? Then consider applying to VRE's Passenger Alliance Coalition (PAC), a group made up of VRE staff members and passengers from both the Fredericksburg and the Manassas lines. The group, which was formed last year, meets once

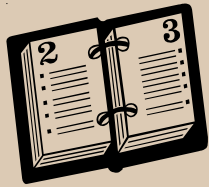


a quarter to discuss issues and gather ideas in an informal lunch setting.

"Our goal is to have at least one passenger from every station represented, and we currently have several stations—including Lorton, Quantico, Woodbridge and Rippon—that are unrepresented," explained Customer Communications Manager April Maguigad.

"We hope that by putting out the word about this group, we can recruit a few more active members to ensure that issues

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### Upcoming Events

Thursday, January 10  
New TLC Ticket Prices  
Take Effect

Monday, January 21  
Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Holiday  
No VRE Service

Wednesday, January 30  
Amtrak/Union Cooling  
Off Period Ends



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.

# Courtesy Reminder:

## *Trains Move when Rears are in Seats!*

Please remember that VRE's new "Standing Means Detraining" policy began on January 7. In short, the policy means that when a train pulls into a station, conductors will assume that any passenger standing in the aisle is intending to detrain, and they will therefore hold the train at the station until no one is left standing in the aisles. (This policy, of course, is only implemented on trains with adequate seating; if the train is "standing room only," then the conductors will use their discretion.) Once the train has departed, passengers can then begin to queue as long as they plan to get off at the next station.

In the past, this policy was implemented when queuing and the resulting crowded aisle ways consistently caused problems on many of VRE's trains, making it impossible for others to detrain and causing them to miss their stop completely. VRE has had excellent results with the system: When people stayed in their seats until their train had physically left the station prior to the one where they detrain, the trains ran on time. When people queued and the trains were held as a result, the passengers ultimately created their own delay ... and the incentive to remain seated quickly outweighed the desire to queue.

Our passengers have already responded positively to the announcement that this policy would be coming, based on a flurry of thanks we received during a recent online forum with VRE's CEO Dale Zehner. A few samples included:

· "Thank you so very much for the new queuing policy announced in this morning's [VRE Today] paper! I detrain at Manassas and have days where I barely make it through the queue line for Broad Run. This sounds like the best way to resolve it for me and my fellow Manassas passengers."

· "THANK YOU! This morning's edition of the VRE Today announced that you are going to get tougher on queuing. I, for one, am truly happy that you are taking this measure."

· "I was glad to read in today's newsletter of the new approach for stopping the "queuing" by making passengers get off the train where they assemble. The problem has gotten so bad that I have seen Manassas riders stopped and confronted by Broad Run passengers, before they were 'allowed' to pass through a gauntlet of as many as 10 people. My co-workers consider it the 'daily running of the bulls.' Thanks for taking action."



As all of our passengers become accustomed to the new policy, we're confident that everyone will become equally as enthusiastic, as it will ensure that everyone can easily detrain at their stop and the "dwell time" at stations will be kept to a minimum. Thank you in advance for helping make the transition to our new policy a smooth one by remembering to please remain seated until the train departs the station immediately prior to your own.

# Possible Amtrak Strike

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In order to help Amtrak and the eight labor unions reach a mutually satisfying compromise, President Bush, on December 1, named five members to a Presidential Emergency Board (PEB), which means that under the Railway Labor Act, the group had until January 1 to make its recommendations, after which the parties have an additional 30 days to consider the recommendations before the affected unions may strike or Amtrak may unilaterally impose wage, rules and working conditions changes. That will mean that the groups' deadline will be the first week of February.

"A potential strike is of great concern to us at VRE," said CEO Dale Zehner, "because without crews or mechanics, we cannot operate our trains. Additionally, Amtrak controls Union Station, and without access into or out of one of our largest hubs—or the ability to park our trains there during the mid-day—we'll be faced with quite a problem should a strike occur. Unfortunately, bringing our trains back out to

suburban layover yards during the day isn't an option, because the distances are too great and other railroad traffic during the day would cause far too much interference on already crowded rail lines."



"We've, of course, been tracking the progress of negotiations very closely," Zehner added, "and we're committed to keeping our passengers as up-to-date as possible throughout this process. But, ultimately, the outcome of the negotiations is out of our control, and should the labor unions decide to

strike, we will have to cease operations during the course of the strike. We are, however, actively looking into alternative options for each station in terms of existing transit (i.e., bus, carpooling, or Metro) in the hopes that we can provide some short-term solutions to commuters who depend on VRE, should a strike occur."

VRE will keep passengers abreast of contract negotiations via VRE Update, its Web site, the Train Talk e-newsletter and, if necessary, seat notices. Please stay tuned!

## *Courtesy Corner*

With the cold weather upon us, we understand the desire to remain in one's car and stay warm until the train is about to arrive. However, keep in mind that your fellow riders may have the same idea.

If you prefer to wait in your car until the train gets nearer, we highly suggest that those who park near the platforms purchase and/or validate their tickets as soon as they arrive at the station.

This way you can immediately board your train when it arrives instead of waiting in line in order to validate.

This speeds up the boarding process so that trains don't become or get further delayed, or worse, that you miss the train.

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## Photo Contest Winners Revealed

Back in September, we offered a photo contest in celebration of VRE's 15th Anniversary. We received some very impressive pictures. So as we move towards our 16th year, we would like to end our 15th year of celebration with congratulations going out to Kenneth Jones, Sandy Skipper, Tim Dicks and Michael Karlik for providing the winning photos of our stations, of our trains, of the view from our

trains and of the folks who ride our trains. These winners will receive a free VRE 15th Anniversary tote bag and will have their photos published on our website.

Thank you to everyone who submitted photos and to everyone who rides our trains. We look forward to future celebrations and to many more years of public service.

# VRE's Passenger Alliance Coalition

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## *Safety Sense*

We've had some nice days, but being only January, there are likely more cold days to come. On these days, follow these tips:

### *For your safety:*

In your car, have a phone, flashlight with extra batteries, first-aid supplies, extra clothes/blanket, cat litter or sand (for traction), jumper cables, knife, high-calorie non perishable food, extra clothing to keep dry, shovel, windshield scraper and brush, compass and road maps. If you keep your car running, open the window to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.

### *For your health:*

Avoid overexertion. Physical strain may cause damage to your heart and lungs. Dress in layers - loose, light-weight, warm, non-cotton clothing because cotton traps sweat. Layers can be removed to avoid perspiration and chill, which could cause hypothermia. Hats save half your body heat from escaping from your head. Snug mittens are better than gloves. Try to stay dry and safe.

unique to each of our stations are covered during our meetings.”

“Our online forums and Meet the Management programs are extremely successful and productive,” added VRE's CEO Dale Zehner, “but meeting in a smaller group setting in a more relaxed environment has really allowed for more dialogue and ‘give and take’ than what larger, more formal settings allow.

We've found, over the past year, that this format really allows and encourages all of us to hear each other's side and gives us the opportunity to really listen to rider comments and dig deeper into other issues. At



the same time, it gives our riders a chance to better understand how we look at issues and try to make informed decisions.”

The PAC meets quarterly, with the next meeting scheduled for February 4. Meetings typically last 1.5 to 2 hours, with frequent dialogue by e-mail in between meetings.

Applications for the PAC will be gathered online; if interested, please visit [www.vre.org/feedback/pac.pdf](http://www.vre.org/feedback/pac.pdf), complete the questionnaire, and submit it by fax or mail. We look forward to hearing from you!

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## TLC Fare Change

Due to a recent increase in Metro's fares, the cost of the TLC passes will be increased by \$25.00. This change in fare will be effective starting the month of February. (For example, if the old zone 9 TLC price was \$298.70, the new zone 9 TLC price will be \$323.70). February TLCs go on sale today, January 10, 2008.

Despite the change in fare, the TLC (Transit Link Card) is still a great bargain that allows unlimited travel on both VRE and Metro for one calendar month with just one ticket. In fact, TLC tickets carry the same benefits as a regular VRE monthly ticket. The VRE portion is replaceable should your TLC become lost. Simply call the VRE Office as soon as possible to report a lost ticket. A TLC ticket that is not found within 48 hours of reporting it missing, is eligible for a replacement for the portion of the ticket that provides travel on the VRE.

We know that sometimes plans change after a ticket is purchased. TLC tickets are refunded at 100% prior to the first of the month. After

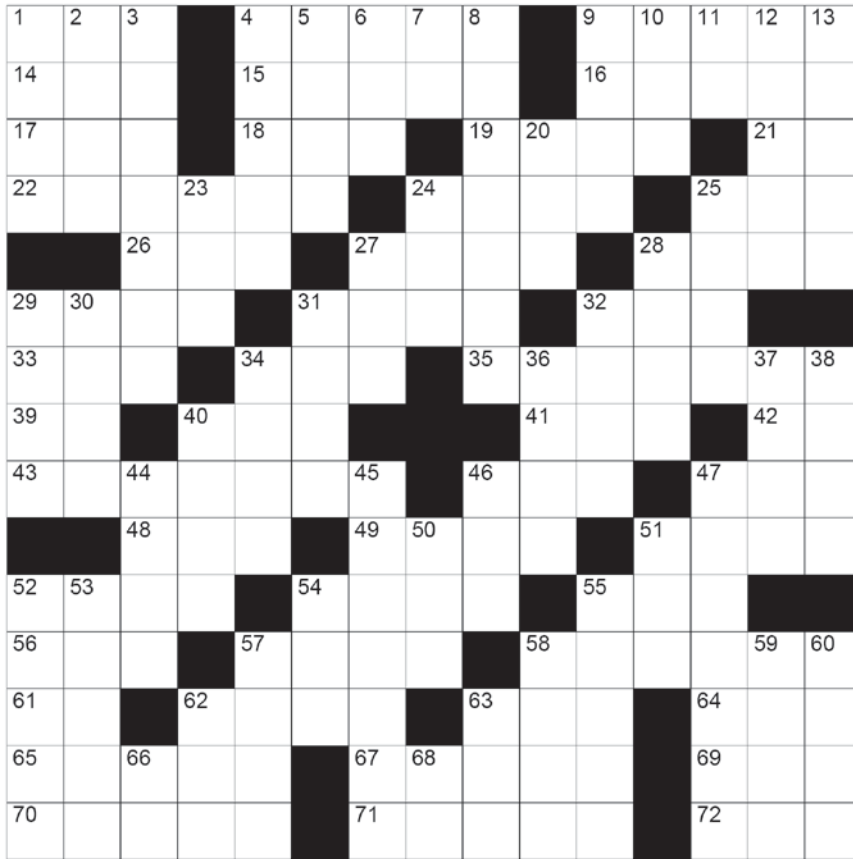
the first of the month, our ability to refund the Metro portion of the fare (\$80.00) is limited, and we are unlikely to be able to provide a credit for that portion. VRE, however, can provide a refund for the VRE portion of the ticket under the same conditions as a regular monthly ticket.

If your TLC becomes demagnetized, the VRE portion of the ticket should be retained for use as if it were a VRE Monthly ticket. Because this portion of your ticket is validated for travel on VRE by your signature, it is unaffected by the demagnetization.

The Metro portion must be taken to one of three Metro locations (listed on our website) to confirm that your ticket has been demagnetized. They will provide a replacement ticket valid for travel on Metrorail. Please retain your VRE ticket. You will need it for travel on VRE.

For more details on any of these benefits, visit our website at [www.vre.org/service/vretlc.htm](http://www.vre.org/service/vretlc.htm) for details.

# Famous Streets



## ACROSS

- 01. Picture border
- 04. Chintzy
- 09. The New York \_\_\_, newspaper
- 14. Airport acronym
- 15. Equus caballus
- 16. Soft-finned fish
- 17. Turf
- 18. Composer Gershwin
- 19. Harvest
- 21. Perform

- 22. The \_\_\_ Way, in ancient Rome
- 24. A \_\_\_ is Born, film
- 25. Barbie's friend
- 26. Yoko \_\_\_
- 27. Goad
- 28. The Way We \_\_\_, film
- 29. Verbalize
- 31. Equipment
- 32. In the distance
- 33. Spanish cheer
- 34. Bed

- 35. \_\_\_ Street, in New Orleans
- 39. Expresses position
- 40. Female hog
- 41. Obtain
- 42. Dr. \_\_\_, Bond film
- 43. \_\_\_ Street, London
- 46. \_\_\_ in the Family, tv show
- 47. Not in
- 48. LummoX
- 49. Contest of speed
- 51. Clio or Erato

## DOWN

- 01. Plateau
- 02. At the summit
- 03. Baby frog
- 04. Monetary unit of China
- 05. Trumpet, for one
- 06. Epoch
- 07. \_\_\_ You Like It, play
- 08. Give cause to worry
- 09. Russian ruler
- 10. Little terror
- 11. New England state: Abbr.
- 12. Senior
- 13. Oliver \_\_\_, director
- 20. Corn spike
- 23. Writing fluid
- 24. Health resort
- 25. Sidewalk edge
- 27. Game, \_\_\_, match
- 28. Blemish
- 29. Frog
- 30. Singing voice
- 31. Wedding dress
- 32. Combustible material

- 34. Hairdo
- 36. Look with amorous intentions
- 37. Burden
- 38. Musical syllable
- 40. Tear in fabric
- 44. Dyestuff
- 45. Rancher
- 46. Do very well on a test
- 47. Beat out
- 50. Mr. Lincoln
- 51. Isle of \_\_\_
- 52. Franciscan, for one
- 53. Jargon
- 54. Constrictor
- 55. Asp
- 57. Margarine
- 58. The Crimson \_\_\_
- 59. Assistant
- 60. Bright light
- 62. 5th \_\_\_, in New York
- 63. Embrace
- 66. Commercial
- 68. Preposition

- 52. Pennant
- 54. I Got You \_\_\_, Sonny and Cher
- 55. Large tub
- 56. Relieve
- 57. Seep
- 58. \_\_\_ Alley
- 61. At home
- 62. Jai \_\_\_
- 63. With it
- 64. Prevaricate
- 65. Century plant
- 67. Musical composition
- 69. Fuss
- 70. \_\_\_ Drive in Beverly Hills
- 71. Baseball's Clemmens
- 72. Longing

Morgan Stanley

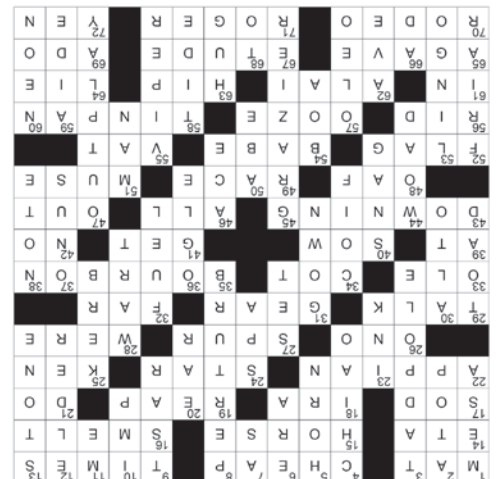
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