



VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

Update



703-684-1001

www.vre.org

March 5, 2008

Editor's Note:

Reminders. They are also good to have. This week's issue is pretty much devoted to reminders. Our lead article reminds passengers about the Quiet Car rules, most of which have been printed on our new Quiet Car signs.

Inside you will see courtesy and safety reminders. Unlike the quiet car rules, these reminders apply to everyone.

In our "In the News" section, we have included some of the reminders from this week's Train Talk message. If you aren't signed up for Train Talk, you may wish to join our email news service by visiting <http://traintalk.vre.org>.

For our final reminder, remember that Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday. Be sure to Spring Ahead so that you won't miss your train on Monday!

Quiet Cars Mean Quiet - Not Silent

Ever since the debut of VRE's Quiet Cars, we've intended for them to be restful, peaceful and quiet, but not necessarily tombs of complete silence. Based on passenger feedback, we're on the right track, but the signs posted in the Quiet Cars weren't helpful in defining what's okay and what's not. So, we've revised the signs posted in our Quiet Cars, and we urge everyone who plans to ride in a Quiet Car to please review the guidelines and respect your fellow quiet-seeking passengers.

Please do:

- 1) Set your cell phone to vibrate, or turn it off. (And, kindly move to another car if you must make or take an incoming call.)
- 2) Whisper—briefly—to your neighbor.
- 3) Send text messages from your PDA or cell phone.

- 4) Listen to music using headphones (but quietly enough that your seatmate doesn't have to listen to tinny rock).
- 5) Use your computer quietly.



Please don't:

- 1) Converse with your neighbor.
- 2) Talk on your cell phone, even at low volume.
- 3) Set the volume so high that others can hear what you're listening to through your headphones.
- 4) Use electronic games or other devices that cannot be silenced.

The Quiet Car is the car located closest to the locomotive.

Seating in this car is provided on a first-come, first-served basis.

Should a passenger have an issue with another rider's noise making, please see a conductor to have the issue resolved.

Proof of Purchase Required for Metrochek Reimbursements

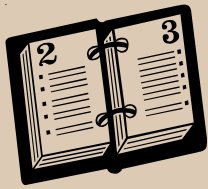
For those VRE riders who mail in Metrocheks for reimbursement of purchased tickets, this message is for you.

While there are a few ways to use Metrocheks, many riders purchase their tickets at the ticket vending machines (TVM) on the platform with

a credit card, and then mail their Metrocheks, proof of purchase and a Metrochek reimbursement form to VRE (see the current form located online at <http://www.vre.org/service/metrochek3.htm>). VRE then applies the refund to the purchaser's credit card up to the

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Volume 4, Issue 4



One-Stop Shopping for SmartBenefits Now Available!

Upcoming Dates

March 5
On-Line Forum
12:00 noon

March 6 and March 7
Battle Street Closure
Manassas Station
(See Page 5)

March 13
Manassas Public
Hearing
7:00p

March 14
Last Day to Comment
on Proposed Fare
Changes

Hooray! In the last issue of *VRE Update*, we announced that we ultimately wanted to make the SmartBenefits program a simple, one-stop shop where passengers could easily sign up for the benefits program. We're pleased to announce that through a partnership between VRE and Commuter Direct the one-stop shop is up and running online!

The first set of requirements for participating in the program remains the same: riders must have a registered SmarTrip card, AND they must be employed by an organization that participates in the SmartBenefits program with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA).

Once those two requirements are met, riders can simply visit www.commuterpage.com/smartbenefits and get started!

From this site, Commuter Direct personnel will help you establish your SmartBenefits Personal Account Service. First, they will ask you how you will be using your SmartBenefits: by purchasing your ticket fare in person at a Commuter Store location, by creating a new CommuterDirect.com customer account so that tickets can be mailed directly to your home or office, or by adding SmartBenefits to an existing CommuterDirect.com account. (Should you

choose the CommuterDirect option, please be aware that VRE will cover the \$6.50 shipping fee that this option entails through September of this year, with the expectation that we'll extend the offer beyond that date.)

Then, CommuterDirect will ask you for the information needed to register your SmarTrip card with Metro and set up your SmartBenefits Personal Account. If you are choosing to start a new CommuterDirect.com customer account, the Web site will guide you through setting up that account.

Once the information is complete, Commuter Direct will act on your behalf in Metro's system to set up your account and will notify you once everything has been completed and your SmartBenefits can begin. (Please note that you will still need to use VRE tickets to board VRE trains. The program and the SmartTrip cards are merely a means of simplifying the purchase of VRE fare media using SmartBenefits and keeping all of your transit accounts in one place.)

One final note: Timing is everything. In order to participate for the following month, your employer needs to have you in Metro's SmartBenefits system by the 15th of the month. Also, you need to apply for your SmartBenefits Personal Account by the 16th of the month.



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.



Meet the Management Begins April 2

The groundhog may have said we have a few more weeks of winter, but the calendar says that spring is just around the corner ... and that means it's once again time for VRE staff to start wearing bright yellow or bright blue shirts on station platforms as "Meet the Management" kicks off for another season.

For new riders, "Meet the Management" is a months-long program in which VRE staff members, who will be easily identifiable, visit all of VRE's stations during the morning or the afternoon rush hours so that you, our customer, have the opportunity to share an opinion, ask a question or give us an idea for making things better. As often as people call us or e-mail us, we know that for many people, there's no better communication than face-to-face, and that's why Meet the Management has historically been one of our most productive and effective ways of hearing what's on your mind.

For those of you with railroad-specific questions, you'll be glad to hear that officials from Norfolk Southern will also participate in the L'Enfant Meet the Management, while CSX officials will take part in our Crystal City program.

And for the old-timers of VRE, Meet the Management has always meant "snack time" ... and it will continue to do so, as we'll provide granola bars and juice in the morning, and sodas, water and cookies in the afternoons. Last year's healthy choice of pretzels was not a

success, with everyone clamoring for cookies. So, we heard you and will bring back our famous cookie option!

Beginning April 2, we'll visit a different station every week with the goal of meeting as many of



VRE Management will be meeting passengers at the platforms at this year's Meet the Management.

our riders as possible to hear any questions, complaints or comments you may have. We're easy to identify—just look for our blue shirts and jackets with "VRE Staff" printed on the back—and, we're easy to find: for stations such as L'Enfant, which sometimes sees upwards of 2,500

VRE riders in a day, we'll send more staff people than for a station like Backlick, which often has only about 200 riders per day. We'll set up at the entrance to the station, or if there are multiple entrances, we'll be along the middle portion of the platform.

We'll continue the program through September, ensuring that during the summer months, when issues like summer heat restrictions are on people's minds, we'll be there to answer your questions and help you through the dog days of summer.

Want to know when we'll be at a station near you? Check out www.vre.org/feedback/mtm.htm. But in the meantime, we'll be at Union Station on April 2 (evening trains) and will continue with all of the destination stations through April 30. Then, starting May 14, we'll visit all of the origination stations in the morning. Please keep an eye out for us, and please come talk to us!

Safety Sense

Stay Behind the Yellow Line

Yes, it is that time again, time for another yellow line reminder.

We occasionally see passengers crowding along the edge of the platform waiting for their train. Many are standing on the yellow tactile edge as the train pulls into the station.

This is a dangerous practice as it leaves no margin for error.

If a person is bumped, they could easily fall into the path of the train. Or, if a bag or other item is large, it could get hooked by part of the engine and a terrible accident could occur.

Passengers not only need to stay BEHIND the yellow tactile edge to ensure their safety, they should stay WELL BEHIND the line. Standing back may not get you on the train first, but it will ensure that can board the train.

Thanks for staying safe.

End of Public Hearings Approaching ...

Courtesy Corner

Be Polished by Acting
Courtly

Baseball players take batting practice. Musicians repeat their scales. Writers review their grammar. Sometimes to be proficient with something, it is best to revisit and practice the basics. Courtesy is no exception, and two simple definitions will give us a good start.

courtesy - 1. Polite behavior. A polite gesture or remark. Given or done as a polite gesture. [From the Old French "cortais" meaning courtly.]

polite - 1. Marked by or showing consideration for others, tact and observance of accepted social usage. 2. Refined; elegant. [From the Latin "politus" meaning to polish.]

If you've been meaning to voice an opinion about VRE's proposed fare change; the subsequent amendment to VRE's Tariff; or an indexing plan for future fare increases, procrastinate no more ... because the final public hearing—on March 13—is fast approaching!

If you can't attend in person, remember that written comments will be accepted through **Friday, March 14, 2008**. Please mail comments to the attention of: Milton Telleria, 1500 King Street, Suite 202, Alexandria, Virginia, 22314. To make your comments via e-mail, please send them to: publiccomment@vre.org OR by fax to: (703) 684-1313.

Rather speak your mind in person? The last of our seven public hearings will be held next week:

March 13, 2008 - 7:00p
Manassas City Hall
City Council Chamber Room
9027 Center Street
Manassas, VA 22110

The public hearings are the result of the FY2009 budget process, in which VRE's Operations Board authorized a fare increase of up to three percent to offset increases in fuel, insurance and maintenance costs. The increase, if approved, would not result in any changes or modifications to the current ticket discount structure.

If adopted, these changes will become effective the first week of July 2008, to

coincide with the start of the FY 2009 budget.

All public hearings are being conducted in locations accessible to persons with disabilities. Any individual with a disability who requires special assistance, such as a sign language interpreter, should send an e-mail to publiccomment@vre.org or call Milton Telleria at (703) 684-1001 or TTY (703) 684-0551. Ideally, you should give at least 10 business days prior to the public hearing



in order to make the necessary arrangements, but with time running out, call today if necessary!

For additional information regarding these hearings, please see VRE's Web site at www.vre.org.



In the News

Removal of One Burke Library Lot Shelter

The shelter, including the pad, closest to the entrance of the Library lot will be removed this week. The second shelter will remain until the Burke VRE garage opens. The shuttle will pull up close to the original site of the first shelter and let passengers board there in addition to the second shelter.

DC Circulator Update

As of March 1, 2008 the two Circulator stops located directly in front of Union Station have been eliminated due to upcoming construction in Columbus Circle. Two new stops have been added to serve riders in Union Station and the surrounding area.

The first stop is located in the parking garage behind Union Station. This stop is accessible by following signs to the mezzanine level

parking garage entrance. The stop is located at the top of the first escalator and beyond the Greyline ticket booth. This location allows for a covered transfer from VRE trains.

The second stop is located at the intersection of Massachusetts Ave. and North Capitol St. NW on the northwest corner.

The DC Circulator costs only \$1 and buses run every 10 minutes.

Visit <http://www.dccirculator.com> or call 202-962-1423 for more information.



Battle Street Closure in Manassas

Battle Street (between the railroad crossing and Prince William Street in Manassas) will be closed March 5 until late April or early May. **Please Note:** This is a change from the Train Talk that was sent on Monday.

Metrocheks

Continued from page 1

cost of the ticket(s) and mails back any Metrocheks that still have a balance on them. Similarly, when passengers purchase tickets from a vendor, vendors are not permitted to give "change" for excess Metrochek amounts.

This service is available for our customers who do not have access to a vendor, or who opt to purchase tickets on the platform. Whatever the reason, please remember that when you mail in Metrocheks for reimbursement, a proof of purchase must accompany each request in order for the refund to be processed.

A proof of purchase can be in the form of the used ticket or receipt, or a copy of the ticket or

receipt, in order to verify the amount of the refund.

This proof of purchase is required in order for us to fulfill our obligations to the Metrochek reimbursement program.

We will continue to reach out by phone to those riders who have not included the proof of purchase, although this does delay processing the refund. Please keep in mind that it is in your best interest to include the proof of purchase to have your reimbursement processed in a timely manner.

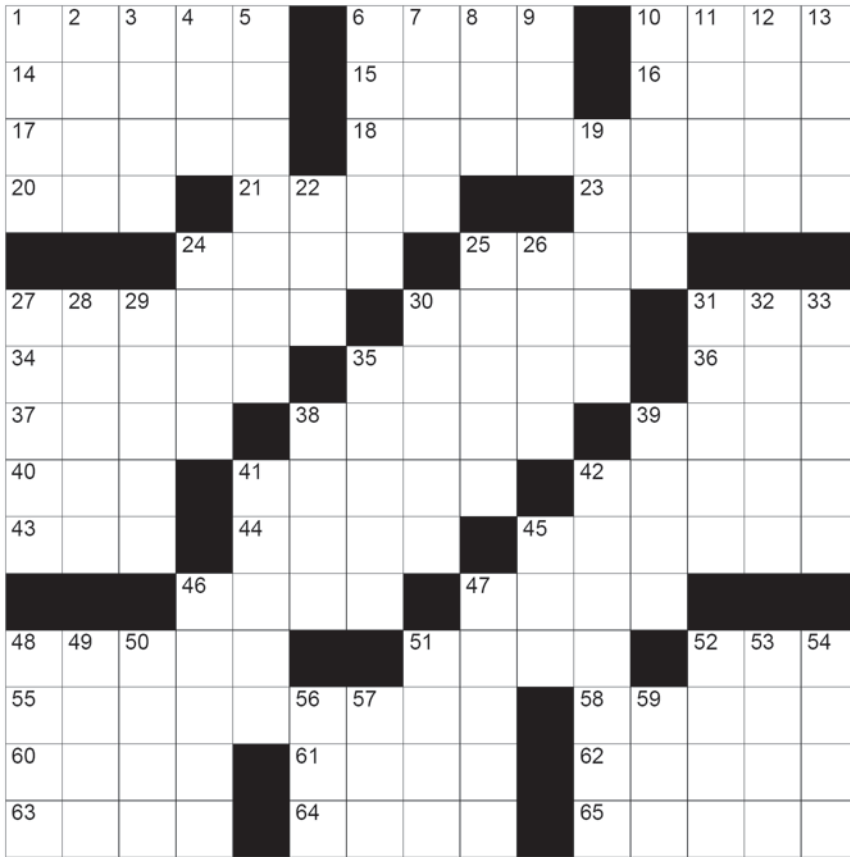
We greatly appreciate your cooperation.



Eat Dessert First in Old Town Manassas

The shops and galleries of Old Town are planning a day of decadence on Saturday, March 8, 2008. From 3:00PM until 8:00PM they are tempting you into their shops with complimentary sweets, and you have their permission to eat dessert *before* dining at one of the many unique restaurants in Old Town. You always wanted dessert first as a kid, and now's your chance to without getting scolded!

Colorful People



ACROSS

- 01. Author of "Charlotte's Web"
- 06. Former MLB player
- 10. Charts
- 14. The Netherworld
- 15. Car
- 16. Howard role
- 17. Decide by vote
- 18. Sweet syrup used in beverages
- 20. Affirmative
- 21. Gigantic
- 23. Type of onions

DOWN

- 02. Sound in health
- 03. March date
- 04. Gumshoe (sl.)
- 05. One who appreciates beauty
- 06. Like some trousers
- 07. Artificial bait
- 08. American Indian
- 09. Long period of time
- 10. Telecommunications need
- 11. "— in the sky" (2 wds.)
- 12. — Floyd, British rock group
- 13. Observes
- 19. Outsider
- 22. One, in Paris
- 24. Miami county
- 25. Inscribed
- 26. Uses an ax
- 27. Prevent
- 28. Expunge
- 29. Used a drill
- 30. Small amount
- 31. Unexcited
- 32. Like a beaver
- 33. Garb
- 35. Former Justice
- 38. Scheme
- 39. Oswald killer
- 41. Jet
- 42. Indian sages
- 45. Wee bit
- 46. Sea birds
- 47. Dole out
- 48. English poet
- 49. French mathematician Descartes
- 50. English college
- 51. Constellations
- 52. "— eye"
- 53. Relax
- 54. Western novelist
- 56. Spring month (abbr.)
- 57. Also
- 59. Mouths



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