



VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

Update

703-684-1001

www.vre.org

September 17, 2008

Editor's Note:

This issue of the *VRE Update* marks the change from a bi-weekly newsletter to a monthly newsletter. What does this mean to you? As part of VRE's attempts to cut costs, we will begin to rely heavily on more cost-effective ways of communicating with you, our riders. Our weekly messages will include more of the information that normally would have been covered in the *VRE Update*.

If you have not done so already, we encourage you to sign up for our e-news service, Train Talk. Email messages are sent to our riders weekly on news and information that may affect your commute. In addition, you can customize your account to have up-to-the-minute service information sent to your desktop, PDA, or phone. To sign up, visit our website at <http://traintalk.vre.org>.

VRE's Budget Situation - The Overview

Despite record breaking ridership, VRE's expenses continue to outpace the revenue gained from our riders. With state and local jurisdiction budgets tightening, VRE is facing its most difficult budget year ever. We have begun our public comment period to gain feedback on the following proposals:

- A mid-fiscal year fare increase of not more than 15% (although it may be less) to become effective in January 2009.
- A fare increase of not more than 10% (although it may be less) at the beginning of our next fiscal year in July 2009.
- A possible decrease in service (most likely the elimination of our mid-day trains) at the beginning of our next fiscal year in July 2009.

The primary reasons behind the proposed fare increases are the following:

Increased fuel costs - Up 78% in the past fiscal year. Fuel costs are projected to exceed budget by approximately \$4 million annually in FY 2009 and FY 2010 based on the latest estimates. While fuel costs have decreased slightly, VRE is still paying an average of \$1.15 more per gallon than this time last year.

Settled labor dispute costs for Amtrak employees - \$3 million one time cost. Amtrak's unions recently settled a multi-year labor dispute. VRE is responsible for labor settlement costs for Amtrak employees who are assigned to VRE trains. Costs comprise both the back pay lump sum and the ongoing increased salary costs.

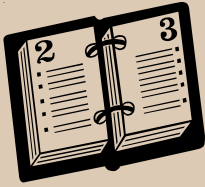
Improved locomotive maintenance - Up \$1 million annually. VRE has increased the amount of locomotive maintenance over the past several months due to the age and reliability of the locomotive fleet. Failures have been reduced and on-time performance has improved significantly.

Overtaken HB 3202 legislation - Loss of \$25 million per year. The first source of dedicated funding for VRE. No additional state funding has been identified.

VRE began conducting public hearings on Thursday, September 11 and will continue until September 30, 2008. We strongly encourage our riders to look over all of these materials carefully and make your opinion known:

- In person at a public hearing
- By email to publiccomment@vre.org
- By fax at 703-684-1313
Attn: Public Comment
- By mail at
Virginia Railway Express
Attn: Public Comment
1500 King Street, Suite 202
Alexandria, VA 22314

Staff will report back to the VRE Operations Board with a summary of comments. If adopted, the FY 2009 fare increase will become effective January 4, 2009 and the FY 2010 fare increase will become effective June 28, 2009.



VRE's Budget Situation - The Details

Public Hearing Dates

Wed., September 17
Fredericksburg
7:00 - 9:00p

Mon., September 22
L'Enfant
12:00 - 2:00p

Wed., September 24
Woodbridge
7:00 - 9:00p

Mon., September 29
Burke Centre
7:00 - 9:00p

Tue., September 30
Manassas
7:00 - 9:00p

Check VRE's website at www.vre.org/feedback/PublicHearing/publichearing.html for specific location information.



VRE Update is a publication of Virginia Railway Express. The newsletter is published monthly 12 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.

Current Situation – FY 2009 and FY 2010

VRE is seeking comment on two potential fare increases and possible service cuts during the next year. The first would be a mid-year fare increase in January 2009 in an amount not to exceed 15%. The second would be a fare increase at the end of June 2009 in an amount not to exceed 10%. While all efforts will be made to keep these increases to a minimum, the Operations Board requested that the maximum amount be discussed at the public hearings knowing that the actual size of the fare increases could be lower. This process will provide the Operations Board with an understanding of how this fare increase would impact riders. While comment is being gathered on both potential fare increases and service cuts, a decision by the Operations Board will not be made until October for any mid-year FY 2009 increase and in December for any FY 2010 fare increase and possible service cuts. Between now and December, VRE will work to reduce the FY 2010 budget deficit so that any fare increase can be minimized.

What has VRE done to prevent this from happening?

VRE has made several budget amendments and program reductions to diminish the deficit, including installation of auxiliary power at the VRE yards to decrease the consumption of diesel fuel and a reduction in administrative costs.

What is VRE going to do to help resolve the issue?

The cost estimates included in the baseline FY 2010 budget will be lowered during the next several months as VRE refines current estimates. VRE is currently working to negotiate a reduction in access costs at Washington Union Terminal; install air compressors at train yards to further reduce locomotive idling; reduce marketing expenses; and pursue alternative sources of revenue. In

addition to raising fares and reducing service, consideration is also being given to terminating certain parking leases that are subject to annual appropriation and reducing the frequency of the onboard newsletter.

Why can't the state or local jurisdictions contribute more funding?

VRE is funded through local, state and federal funds. The federal and state funds are based on formulas that are not negotiable. Most local jurisdictions rely on gas tax funding to pay their VRE subsidy. While they are collecting more gas tax funding, they have indicated that additional funds for VRE may not be available due to other budgetary needs. The eight local jurisdictions which own VRE are facing their own dire financial situation caused by the considerable decrease in property values, rising fuel costs, and declining state revenues.

In addition, while VRE was to receive \$25 million annually from regional taxes legislated by the General Assembly, known as HB 3202 funding, the Virginia Supreme Court ruled that collection of this revenue was not constitutional and no alternative sources of funding have been provided by the Virginia General Assembly.

Which trains are being proposed for elimination?

VRE is hoping not to recommend any service reductions because we believe that cutting service during this time of record-breaking ridership would be detrimental to the system. That said, if the combination of cost reductions and fare increases cannot close the deficit, we may be forced to recommend service cuts to the Operations Board. If that happens, we would recommend that the mid-day trains be eliminated.

Gotta Have a Ticket to Ride

If you went to a concert without your ticket, would you expect to sit in “your” orchestra seats? If you got to an airport without your ticket, would you expect to board?

We didn’t think so.

So perhaps it should come as no surprise that at VRE, we have the same policy: all riders must have a validated ticket in hand before boarding our trains. That means that all Ten-Trip and Single-Ride tickets must be validated at the ticket vending machines (TVMs) on the platform before the ticket holder boards, and all monthly passes must be signed. If for some reason a passenger is unable to purchase and/or validate their ticket via the TVM, then they must speak with the conductor prior to boarding the train.

Why do we insist that passengers talk to the conductor before boarding? First, because we don’t sell tickets onboard our trains; and secondly, because we think that it’s grossly unfair to ask our conductors to be onboard judges. In other words, we can’t—and won’t—ask our conductors to decide who truly forgot

to validate their ticket or who purposely boarded the train without the proper fare in the hopes of riding free. As a result, our zero tolerance policy instructs our conductors to issue a summons to anyone who is onboard without a valid ticket. (The fine is currently \$150, and current court costs are \$71.)

And although VRE does not benefit financially from any fines paid by VRE riders (the fines go to the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the court costs go to the court where the case was heard), we do benefit in other ways: we’re able to protect our conductors from making impossible judgment calls, and we can better ensure that all of our passengers are treated fairly and equally.

So please, validate your ticket prior to boarding, and if you have any problems whatsoever in locating, buying or validating your ticket, please talk to a conductor before you board. It’s really that simple!

Save The Date for A Public Workshop on the Gainesville-Haymarket Extension

You are invited to the second Public Workshop for the VRE Gainesville-Haymarket Feasibility Study and Alternatives Analysis. Join VRE representatives to ask questions, learn, and share your thoughts and opinions of the study.

Join us on:
Wednesday, October 22, 2008
Battlefield High School
15000 Graduation Drive
Haymarket, VA 20169

6:30 -7:00 p.m. Open House
7:00 p.m. Presentation and Public Discussion
9:00 p.m. Close



Courtesy Corner

Please do not smoke on the stairs or at the foot of the stairways leading to the platforms.

Smoking is restricted to the first hundred feet of the northern most part of our platforms.

Please pay attention so as not to scratch or ding the vehicles that are parked next to you when you open your car’s door.

Please be aware of bulky backpacks and shoulder bags. Keep them low and in front of you when walking down the narrow train aisles.

Nothing shows a lack of courtesy like knocking someone in the head with your bag because you were unaware of your surroundings.

Do You Know Where Your Backup Plan Is?

Safety Sense

Report anything appearing unusual or suspicious on the train to a member of the crew.

Report anything appearing unusual or suspicious at a station to local law enforcement by dialing 911.

When at a station with children, keep them away from the tracks and next to you at all times.

Never sit on the edge of a platform.

Watch out for a second train!

Some stations require you to walk across two tracks. Once the last car of a train passes, don't cross until you are sure no other trains are coming from either direction.

Shortly after September 11, “having a plan” took on new meaning. In the event of an attack, friends and families started asking one another, where will we meet? How will we get in touch?



And, in the case of VRE passengers, how will we get home?

It's been seven years since then, and although we're sure that many of our passengers took the time to develop backup transit plans in the event of an emergency, we're sure that just as many passengers never did. Or, their plans are outdated.

So this month, we wanted to take the time to remind all of our passengers that backup transit plans really are important to have ... because while national emergencies are thankfully few and far between, service disruptions—whether it's a broken signal or a floundering freight train—are a reality. We strongly encourage all of our passengers to look at a variety of different transit methods to see what might work best for them, should our trains be severely delayed. Is there a local or regional bus service, such as Fairfax Connector or OMNI, that could be

helpful in the event of an emergency? Are there fellow passengers that you see in the parking lots every day with whom you could carpool into work in the morning if service is disrupted?

Do you know where slug lines form near your home? Is there a group of “passenger pals” who you ride and chat with during every commute and with whom you could exchange contact information to ensure that getting home at night isn't a solo adventure? No matter what you decide will best work for your circumstances, the important thing is to put some serious thought into it, do some research, and have a plan so that if something goes awry on the rails, you're prepared.

We hope it goes without saying, but just in case, our goal at VRE is to always provide the best and safest service we can possibly provide. But some things do remain out of our

control, and there are occasions when unforeseen circumstances simply don't allow us to run our trains as we wish. Yes, there have been occasions when we have tried to provide alternative service for our passengers—during extreme delays during the evening commute, for example, we've called in buses so that we don't strand anyone in the city at night—but even then, it can take up to two hours to cobble together enough buses from local service providers.

So, should a significant delay occur, and you cannot wait for service to resume, then it's time to pull out your backup plan and act accordingly. We'll always try our best, but given the impossibility of controlling every aspect of traveling through one of the nation's busiest rail corridors, we know that our best might not always meet your needs. So please, plan for those occasions.

The Real Definition of On-Time Performance

Webster's definition of "late:" (lāt)(adj.) Not arriving until after an expected time.

VRE's definition of "late:" (lāt)(adj.) When one of our trains arrives six minutes or more after its scheduled time at the last station on either the Manassas or Fredericksburg line.

Surprised? Did you think that we considered our trains late only when we handed out free ride certificates (FRCs)? If you thought so, you're not alone; we've received a lot of e-mails and comments lately that have made it pretty clear that a lot of our passengers think that we consider a train on-time until it comes time to hand out FRCs (which happens when a train pulls into a station 60 minutes or more after its scheduled arrival).

We thought it was time to set the record straight, because the difference between perception and reality is vast: we actually consider a train to be late if it arrives six minutes or more after its scheduled arrival—a full 54 minutes before we start handing out FRCs. This is an important difference to understand, because our on-time performance (OTP) statistics are calculated based on what time the train arrives at the last station on the line. If it arrives within five minutes of its scheduled arrival time, it gets a 100 percent OTP mark

for that run. But if it's six minutes or more, we consider it late.

Budgetary limitations and fiscal responsibility doesn't allow us to start handing out FRCs that quickly, but it certainly doesn't mean we don't start caring about late trains until they near the 60-minute mark. Rather, we care just as



much about a six-minute late train than a 60-minute late train for the simple reason that both affect our OTP statistics the same way. Both show up on our OTP ratings as a delay, and while the length of the delay obviously differs, delays of any type are not something we're proud of. Our goal is to always provide excellent service and get our passengers to their destinations

on time, and it's a goal that our Operations Board and participating jurisdictions hold us to as well. Thankfully, we've had a relatively quiet summer, with a few notable exceptions, and it's made for overall high OTP ratings.

Still, rest assured that we'll always strive to reduce the number of delays and the length of delays ... so even if you don't end up with an FRC at the end of the day, we've still noted the delay in our records and will take every action we can to ensure it doesn't happen again.

Absentee Voting

If you work and commute to and from home for 11 or more hours between 6:00am and 7:00pm on election day, you have a right to request an absentee ballot for the upcoming November 4, 2008 Election.


Important dates you need to know:

1. Deadline to register to vote is October 6, 2008 by 5:00pm.
2. Application to absentee can be turned in 12 months in advance of the election.
3. Absentee Saturdays are October 25th and November 1st hours are 9am-5pm.
4. The last day to request a ballot to be mailed is October 28, 2008.


Election Day is November 4, 2008. Polls are open from 6AM to 7PM.

If you would like more information about elections or would like to request an absentee ballot application please contact your local Registrar by visiting the State Board of Elections web site located at www.sbe.virginia.gov.

(Information provided by the City of Manassas Park Office of Voter Registration.)



THIS FALL AT
SKIES THE LIMIT ACADEMY
CHILD CARE CENTER !!!



KICKBOXING CLASSES, TUTORING , GAME NIGHTS FOR OUR SCHOOL AGE PROGRAM
WEB CAMERAS—VIEW YOUR CHILD WHILE AT WORK
ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS FOR OUR TODDLERS AND PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN AND THE BEST
INFANT CARE IN THE AREA !!!

WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON OUR WELL TRAINED STAFF AND GREAT ENVIRONMENT

AT SKIES THE LIMIT ACADEMY WE PUT
CHILDREN FIRST !!

Our Location:
8450 Maplewood Drive
Manassas, VA
(703) 392-7890
www.skies-thelimitllc.com
parents@skies-thelimitllc.com
LOCATED 2 MILES FROM MANASSAS AND MANASSAS PARK STATIONS

*On-Time
Performance by
Train for the month
of August 2008*

Fredericksburg Line

300 – 95%
302 – 90%
304 – 100%
306 – 100%
308 – 95%
310 – 100%

301 – 86%
303 – 86%
305 – 100%
307 – 95%
309 – 95%
311 – 95%
313 – 81%

Overall – 94%

Manassas Line

322 – 100%
324 – 100%
326 – 95%
328 – 95%
330 – 90%
332 – 100%

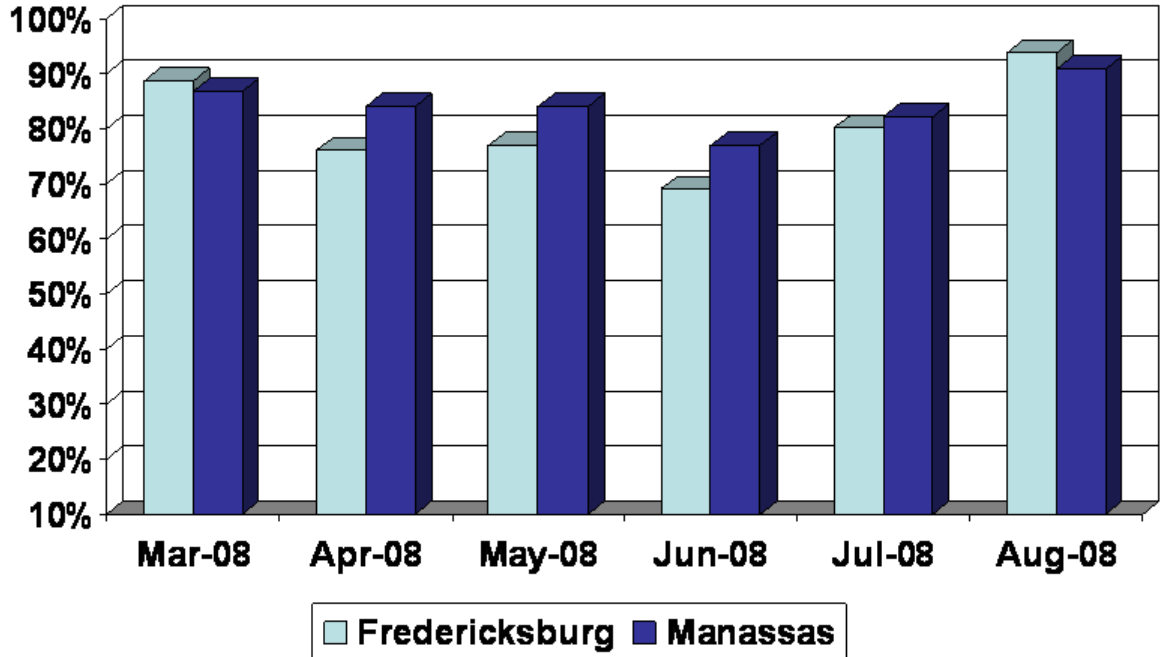
325 – 86%
327 – 86%
329 – 90%
331 – 95%
333 – 90%
335 – 76%
337 – 72%

Overall – 91%

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

On-Time Performance

Over The Last Six Months



THREE GREAT REASONS TO BUY A BRAND NEW CONDO?

3
WALK TO MANASSAS VRE

2
One Year of Condo Fees FREE*

1
Priced from the \$180's

*So, What's The Reason
You're Not Here Yet?*



703-365-9657

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Pricing and offers subject to change *Offer good thru 10/15/08 on full price sale.