



VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS UPDATE

703-684-1001

www.vre.org

August 5, 2009

Editor's Note:

While August may be a slow month for VRE news, there are some very important articles in this month's Update, namely an important Spotsylvania Public Meeting taking place on August 18th and detailed information about the new ticket validation law. Remember folks, validate, validate, validate! This is something that we are taking very seriously.

So, enjoy the Update, and we'll see you after the dogs days.

How Does the New Ticket Law Affect You?

Over the last month or so, we have received a number of questions about the new ticket validation law. While we have some of the answers, there are some things that we simply won't have the answer to until we have seen the new law in action. In the meanwhile, here are the answers to a few of the common questions we receive.

Why did the law change?

The original law treated all types of invalid tickets the same. While most cases that went to court were for "forgotten" validations, we have been seeing an increase in counterfeit tickets. In the eyes of the law, this was the same as forgetting to validate tickets. We worked with our state representatives to have a law with a higher penalty for counterfeit tickets. While we had hoped for a new law to cover only the counterfeit issue, the law makers revamped the entire section. Now all instances of invalid tickets, regardless of type or reason, are charged as Class 2 misdemeanors. While these types of infractions normally carry a fine of not more than \$1000 and/or up to six months in jail, the code limits the fine to \$500.

Am I going to go to jail for not validating my ticket?

Most likely, no. The judges have the ability to fine riders, and we think this is the course that they will take most of the time. However, counterfeiters or repeat offenders may receive harsher penalties.

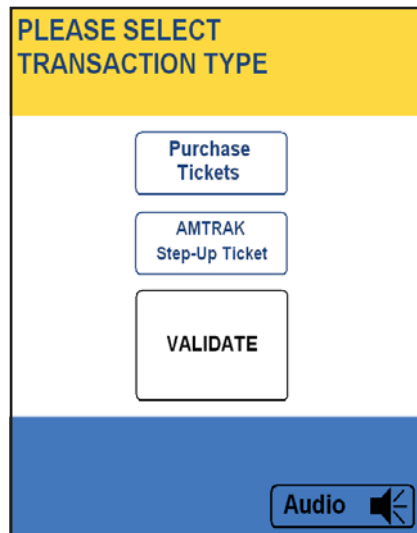
Can I still pre-pay the fine or do I have to go to court?

Unfortunately, riders can no longer pre-pay a standard fine. All riders must go to court for an arraignment, usually scheduled for two weeks after the citation date. Once

there, riders can plead guilty and be fined by the judge, or they can ask for a trial date. Please keep in mind that failure to show up at the arraignment date will result in a trial date being set. Failure to show up at the trial date may also result in higher fines and the potential of an arrest warrant being issued.

I made an honest mistake. Why can't you cut me some slack?

Our conductors are required to check tickets. You are required to have a valid ticket. If a conductor finds you
Continued on page 4





Upcoming Dates

Wed. August 5
On-line Forum
Noon

Tue. August 18
Spotsylvania/VRE
Public Hearing
Courtland High
School auditorium
6701 Smith Station
Road - 6:30pm



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. Comments and questions may be directed to VRE at gotrains@vre.org or at (703) 684-1001.

A Railroader's Timepiece

A Brief History

Ever since the first train departed, the question has been asked "what time did it leave?" or "what time will it arrive?" Keeping time on the railroad began as an imperfect science. Timepieces of the very early 1800's were notorious for losing as much as ten minutes a day. As more and more trains began to operate on the same track, risks of confusion arose with many different trains operating on a non-standardized time schedule. As automatic signaling had not yet been developed, railroad operations were coordinated around timing. This lack of precision finally resulted in the fatal collision of two trains outside of Cleveland, Ohio.

Following this incident, railroad investigations revealed that the accident was due solely to the fact that the engineer was using a timepiece that was defective and had not been displaying the correct time. But what was the correct time? Each railroad had its own opinion and each station along the way did too. The railroads operating in America sat down following the findings of the investigations and agreed to establish standard times and to create a standard clock. Railroads would also establish requirements for what an acceptable time piece was. Among several highly technical internal specifications, the early requirements for a railroad approved timepiece was that it must be open faced (pocket watches without a closing cover), engineered to keep accurate set time within 30 seconds per week, as well as have a plain white dial with black Arabic numerals.

Railroads installed clock stations at central points where train crews were assigned and rules went into effect stating that all crewmembers were to set their watches to the standard time as displayed by the central clock and coordinate time

with each other prior to their tour of duty.

This advancement proved to be very beneficial and exponentially improved the railroad's operating efficiency and drastically reduced the number of near-miss incidents or actual rail collisions resulting from poor timekeeping. Secondary benefits from these changes in how time was viewed created a renewed interest in timekeeping and accuracy.



Companies like Ball, Waltham and Hamilton in America and the newly formed Hans Wilsdorf Watchmakers (later des-

ignated as Rolex) and the Louis Brant watch company (later renamed as today's Omega S.A.) of Europe began manufacturing pocket-watches that were capable of withstanding extreme temperatures, moisture, as well as being bumped and dropped, perfect for the demanding environment incumbent on the railroad.

Although much has changed since those days, time is a very crucial element to railroad operations. All railroads operating in North America, including Norfolk Southern and CSXT (our host railroads) continue to have watch construction and time keeping specifications. As watch making is vastly superior to the early days of timekeeping, the technical requirements for a watch's movement are less technical or in some cases, absent. However, the requirement of no greater loss of 30 seconds is acceptable and all numbers must be displayed as Arabic numerals. United States Naval Observatory time is statistically one of the most precise clocks on earth and is established as the "standard clock" given today's relative absence of large centralized train crewing locations. VRE crews coordinate their personal timepieces with the timing on the USNO clock daily to ensure you arrive to and from your destination on time.

Transportation Meeting

Spotsylvania - August 18

As Spotsylvania County continues to grow, and more of its residents make the long commute to Washington, DC, the question of whether to join VRE as its ninth member jurisdiction is gaining attention. And on Tuesday, August 18, 2009, a public hearing has been scheduled to discuss and debate VRE and other transportation issues.

The meeting is the result of a vote the Spotsylvania Board of Supervisors held at their June 23 work session and is intended to hear comments on VRE and on adoption of a Master Agreement, an ordinance that all member jurisdictions must adhere to when agreeing to go in VRE. The public hearing will begin at

6:30 p.m. in the Courtland High School auditorium at 6701 Smith Station Road in Spotsylvania and will be broadcast live by Comcast Cable, Channel 23.

Momentum for the August meeting gained power in June, after a "VRE Summit," sponsored by Spotsylvania Supervisor Jerry Logan and attended by more than 70 citizens, during which representatives from VRE, Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC), CSX, Office of Congressman Rob Wittman, State Senator Ed Houck and Spotsylvania discussed in detail what joining VRE and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission

Continued on page 4



Safety Sense

Have you ever thrown a basketball from mid-court towards the hoop in hopes that you will make it? What are the chances that you'll miss? Now imagine that you are the ball, and the hoop is a door on several tons of steel moving above a set of steel wheels. Would you still be willing to risk missing that shot, considering that to miss could mean the loss of life or limb?

In the past, we've had some of our less "thoughtful" passengers foolishly attempt to run and jump into or out of the door where the Conductor stands as the train was moving.

Obviously, this is dangerous and those trying to board have fallen and injured themselves in the attempt. They have also injured Conductors. Luckily no one has died.

Never attempt to board (or exit) a moving train, especially where the Conductor stands. To do so will result in your immediate expulsion from the train.

Be safe. Arrive to the platform on time. Never run. In this case, a mindless decision could be your last. It's just not worth it.

Courtesy: Pass it On!



You know how much better it feels when someone holds the door for you rather than letting it slam in your face?

Or, waves you on first at a four-way stop? Or, says thank you with a smile?

Now imagine that every day, and every commute, felt like that.

Best thing is, you can help make it so. This summer, we're hoping all of our commuters will take summers' rising temperatures as reason enough to slow down and chill rather than get hot under the collar. Here's a few ideas that are long on courtesy and, hopefully, will inspire your fellow commuters to remember what their moms taught them and pass along more random acts of kindness.

1. Leave on time, so that you can drive slowly and carefully in the parking lot.
2. Use your signals so that cars will know where you're turning, and

have less chance of accidentally taking the spot you had your eye on.

3. Conductors are people too. If the ticket vending machine is giving you fits, don't take it out on the conductor. Just explain the situation, let them help you, and be on your way. No need to yell, curse, or make it their fault.

4. Smoke only in the northern end of the platform, and remember that applies to lighting up and disposing of your cigarette butts, too.

5. Remember that unless you paid for two seats, you only get to use one seat. Put your stuff in the overhead compartment or under your seat. If it's a dripping umbrella, go for the floor.

6. Feigning sleep so that people are hesitant to ask for the window seat is unfair and not cool.

7. If you're sitting on the upper deck, please don't place your feet on the rails. The people standing underneath you don't really need the dirt from your shoes on their heads.



New Ticket Law...

Continued from page 1

without a valid ticket, it is not up to the conductor to determine what the circumstances are in a particular situation. Some riders are legitimately trying to work the system. It is simply unfair for our conductors to be placed in a position to decide who is right and who is wrong. That is for the judge to decide.

To be honest, we have heard nearly every reason there is. It was raining. I was on vacation the week before. I got to the train station too late. I normally have a monthly pass.

Which ones of these are legitimate?

What's the solution?

If you are a regular rider, the best answer we can give you is: Buy a monthly ticket. At 34% off the Single-Ride fare, these tickets usually pay for themselves in 13 days. In a 21 or 22 day month, this is nearly 2 weeks for free when compared with the one-way price. If you must use a 10-Trip, then please be sure to validate. Then you won't have any cause to worry.

Transportation Meeting...

Continued from page 3

(PRTC) would mean. Among the topics discussed were the potential uses of a proposed two percent gas tax that could help fund the County's transportation needs; the benefits and challenges of having VRE service extended to Spotsylvania; and how VRE could further benefit a County in which more than 1,000 residents currently use its rail service.

The VRE Operations Board, in a letter sent to Henry "Hap" Connors, chairman of Spotsylvania's Board of Supervisors, very much believes Spotsylvania County should join VRE, and is committed to facilitating this to the greatest extent possible.

"This desire is not new," wrote VRE Operations Board Chairman Christopher Zimmerman to Connors. "VRE's eight member jurisdictions have intermittently discussed membership with [Spotsylvania] County since before VRE service began, and more earnestly for the past several years. VRE is regarded as a premier commuter rail service; the realization of a shared vision by the member jurisdictions that efficient, cost effective commuter rail service is an essential component of their economic success."

That said, the Operations Board has also made it clear that Spotsylvania

would need to join under the same "Master Agreement" as other member jurisdictions, with all applicable funding requirements and responsibilities adhered to.

Still, VRE is viewing the August meeting as an opportunity for the County to explore all transportation enhancements rather than focus solely on rail.

"We're hopeful that this meeting will take a broad-based approach to transportation issues," said Mark Roeber, VRE's manager of public affairs and government relations. "We of course hope that current VRE passengers will attend to voice their opinions, but we also hope to hear from those who are supporters of multi-modal mass transportation that could broaden all types of transit options and broaden funding for whatever type of transportation development is most realistic and would work best for the County at large. This shouldn't be a narrow discussion of VRE; it should instead be a discussion of how VRE plays in to the mix of buses, roads, trails, sidewalks and any other network of transportation options that citizens rely upon."

Following the meeting, a vote from the Board of Supervisors is expected. It may either take place immediately or over the course of the next several months.