

Virginia Railway Express

Update

ALEXANDRIA CRYSTAL CITY L'ENFANT UNION STATION
BROAD RUN MANASSAS MANASSAS PARK BURKE CENTRE
FREDERICKSBURG LEELAND ROAD BROOKE QUANTICO RIPPON WOODBRIDGE LORTON FRANCONIA/SPRINGFIELD

703-684-1001

www.vre.org

August 24th, 2011

Meet the Management - Follow Up



Meet the Management is over for now but will be back again next April. Until then here are some of the questions and issues that were asked or brought to our attention. We thought it might be useful to go over some of these items in case some of our riders were unable to make it out to see us and say hello.

One rider at Union Station suggested that **when writing the short text emails during delays that we should include which line we are referring to as well as our train numbers.** While we do include which line we are referring to in our longer emailed messages, cell phone text messages are limited in the number of characters that we can use, therefore, some non-essential information occasionally has to be left out when explaining what is going on. Train numbers are almost always mentioned (only 3 characters long) so riders

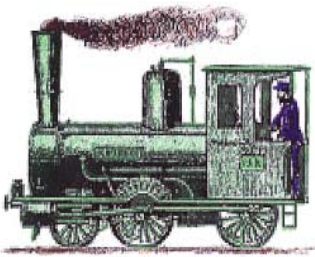
should become familiar with what train number they are on.

One rider at Manassas asked **why they couldn't keep their validated FRC as a proof of purchase.** Conductors only tear tickets that have been validated already. We have asked the crews to now only rip validated FRC tickets and to *not* collect them so that riders can use them for transfer purposes.

One rider at Brooke asked if **we could guarantee seats for Monthly tickets holders.** Another at Brooke asked **why there is no validation on the trains.** Monthly ticket holders are buying tickets at a 34% discounted price. As our trains are first come first serve, and because crowding has recently been such an issue, buying any ticket does not guarantee anyone a seat, only a ride on the train. Like Metro, many riders end up standing. As for on board validation machines, at this time this has been found to be cost-prohibitive as well as incompatible with the equipment that is currently in use. The idea that

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Transit Benefits FAQ on our Website



What are Transit Benefits? Transit benefits are issued by an employer to their employees to assist them in purchasing transit fares for commuting purposes. Transit benefits come in a variety of forms depending on how the employer wishes to handle them. They can be vouchers,

checks, electronic SmartBenefits, debit cards and can be employee funded (pre-tax or post-tax) or employer-funded.

How Do I Get These Benefits? Most employers will assist you in arranging your transit benefits as part of the hiring process. Only your employer can tell you what benefit options they offer, how they are managed/issued, and how to sign up for them.

What are Smart Benefits®? SmartBenefits® is the region's most common form of transit benefit. It is a program managed and operated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, or WMATA (<http://www.wmata.com>) better known as the operator of Metrorail and Metrobus. Because transit vouchers have gone away and many are transitioning to a new benefit type, we have decided to put a frequently asked questions page up on our website about transit benefits.

While SmartBenefits can be used to purchase VRE tickets, we do not deal with the administration of these transit benefits, but we can point you in the direction of those who do. For these frequently asked questions, and for answers to questions like Who Accepts Electronic Smart Benefits® for VRE tickets? and What Do I Need to Do to Use SmartBenefits to Purchase VRE Tickets? please visit our website at <http://www.vre.org/service/service-information.htm>.



Upcoming Events

Monday, September 5th, Labor Day, No VRE Service

Monday, October 10th, Columbus Day, No VRE Service

Friday, November 11th, Veterans Day, No VRE Service

Thursday, November 24th, Thanksgiving, No VRE Service

Friday, November 25th, Day After Thanksgiving, "S" Schedule

Friday, December 23rd, Christmas Eve Observance, "S" Schedule

Monday, December 26th, Christmas Observance, No VRE Service



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@vire.org or at (703) 684-1001.

Meet Tim Riggan, Keolis Engineer



Like many of our crew members, Tim Riggan is new to Keolis, but he is no stranger to the railroad.

He began his career with Amtrak in 1994 in Jacksonville, Florida as a conductor, and after two years he was

promoted to engineer, a position he has held for the last 14 years. In 1996, Tim moved to Florence, SC, where he operated trains between Washington, D.C. and Florence. In 2010, Tim was hired by Keolis after hearing from fellow Florence Amtrak engineer, Chipp Boone (who is now the current Keolis Transportation Manager, who oversees all daily operations on the Fredericksburg Line) that Keolis was looking for locomotive engineers to operate VRE service. Both Tim and Chipp's fathers had worked together on the railroad "back in the day."

Originally, Tim operated trains 312 and 313 on the Fredericksburg line. This past June he decided to become an extra board engineer and substitute when other employees were out due to vacation, illness, or training. This choice has allowed him to spend more time with his family.

In addition to working for Keolis as an engineer, Tim has also spent some time working in VRE's Communications Room

in Alexandria. During morning and evening service, both VRE and Keolis have an employee working in the Communications Room to allow for joint decisions and faster communications.

Having conductors and engineers in the office has allowed the crews to see the bigger picture of how the operation works and has helped the VRE Communications staff learn more about how the railroad works from an engineer's or conductor's point of view.

"Tim worked at VRE for about one month and really helped me understand the locomotive braking system, giving me a different perspective as I answered rider questions about things like overshooting platforms," explained Jeremy Flores, VRE's Manager of Operations and Customer Communications.

While our riders are no doubt intrigued by what brings Tim to Keolis and VRE, we also know that many of our riders will be interested in some of his extracurricular activities. In addition to his full time job as a train engineer and all of the duties that go along with being a parent, Tim also serves in the National Guard out of North Carolina. He has served in Iraq, controlling airstrikes from aviation platforms as a TACP (tactical air party). "We utilized a wide variety of techniques and equipment to accomplish the mission and were on the forefront of the fight and, often, well behind enemy lines," recalls Tim.

Tim owns a beautiful home on Lake Anna and commutes to Fredericksburg. He is married and has two sons aged 17 and 4. Lately, he has been thinking about getting a boat, since he now lives on a lake, but admits that he may have to wait until next year. He has plenty of projects, he says, to keep him busy for now.

At VRE we have multiple ways communicate with our riders. Here are three:

- Train Talk. Want to find out how late your train is and why? Wish you could get updates sent to your phone? Interested in knowing the latest and greatest news at VRE? Then sign up today for VRE's TrainTalk e-newsletter. Subscribing is easy; simply visit <http://traintalk.vre.org> to get started.
- Twitter. Twitter is a free site that allows messages to be received via their website and via text messages on cell phones. People must first register to "follow" in order to receive "tweets" . Interested in following VRE on Twitter? Register by visiting www.twitter.com/VaRailXpress, and clicking on "join today".
- Facebook. VRE's Facebook page provides info about upcoming events, such as board meetings, Meet the Management schedules and on-line chats with CEO Dale Zehner. It's also a good place to join in on active discussion boards. We consider our Facebook page to be a more informal way to reach out to people. It's a great way to keep in touch and keep our ridership up to date on issues that affect them.

Meet the Management... • continued from page 1



some have had of having a conductor punch a ticket damages the ticket and it then cannot be put into a machine for further validation. Also, having a conductor use an inked date stamp on the front of the ticket does not allow for the micro-encoding stripe on the back to be read, which allows for the easy use of counterfeit tickets.

One rider at L'Enfant commented that **the windbreaks there impede traffic flow when the platforms are too crowded**. We have since removed three of the windbreaks at the L'Enfant station.

One rider at Manassas Park asked **if the wheel chair cage could be removed from the platform**. We do have eventual plans to remove all the cages from all of our platforms. While not one of our highest priority projects at this time, it will eventually be done.

How Stuff Works: Over the years we have had informational articles and shared tidbits on how stuff works, to be more specific, how things on the railroad work. In this edition, we present the exciting world of "How the Electronic Announcement System Works".

The new VRE railcars provide a variety of onboard Train Communication Systems (TCS) for passengers during train service. Each Gallery car's TCS operates as an independent system while simultaneously communicating and synchronizing between each other within a train. The Train Communication System consists of seven types of stand-alone units which communicate with each other within a car and other cars in a systematic and intricate way through an Ethernet network:

1. The Crew Network Interface allows crews to communicate amongst themselves using the TCS. This is sometimes used to when a more private conversation is needed in lieu of the handheld radios which anyone along the railroad (other trains) can hear.
2. The Passenger Emergency Intercom which allows passengers to contact the conductor in case of an emergency. Passengers can press the red button on the console near each vestibule door and in the restrooms. Pressing the button sends a message across the train that there is a passenger needing assistance. Conductors picking up a hand set are immediately connected with the location where the button was pushed.
3. The Communication Control Unit is the onboard computer and memory bank. Pre-recorded special messages are stored here and can be played at any point along the route. Passengers will likely recognize these messages; examples include holiday messages, Life on the Train episodes, and other routine messages.
4. The Operator Display Keyboard is the programmable aspect of the onboard announcement system where route information can be adjusted and volume levels can be

At Crystal City, one rider asked **if the step stools could be regularly used there**. While crews are only required to place step boxes down at Alexandria and Union Station, we have asked our crews to try to set out a step box at every station if possible. Remember, if you need the use of a step box at any station please let the conductor know and they'll be happy to assist.

One person at Leeland asked **if we could pave the temporary dirt parking lot**. Unfortunately, Stafford County leases that lot from the developer so it cannot be paved.

These are just some of the many questions that were asked this year. While Meet the Management is on hiatus for now, you can still contact us and ask questions, whether through email (gotrains@vre.org) or by asking our CEO, Dale Zehner, directly during his monthly online message board session "Online Forum."

set. While the train crew can control these aspects, the mechanical crews are responsible for the volume levels.

5. The Communication Control Panel controls the electric functions of things like the onboard radios, the PA system, and the volume switches. It allows the pre-recorded messages to be played manually or automatically through the automatic announcement system. For example, at the beginning of each train's run, a route is set up on the announcement system and the related announcements are made over the PA. Both the system programmed for the route, and the wheel sensors are used to measure the distance after each stop, there-by determining the train's location for the timing of next station message. The sensors measure the distance by using the wheel diameter and number of revolution between stations. The calculation also accounts for any change in wheel size by using a correction factor to adjust for any changes in wheel diameter. This is all determined by the Communication Control Panel.

6. The Analog Train-Line Interface converts digital signals to analog signals. This system interfaces with the Passenger Emergency Intercom, the Public Address system (both live and pre-recorded), all Visual information (like the scrolling signage), the Crew Intercom, and the Train Radio. The Analog Train-Line Interface also provides maintenance and diagnostic tools for the system, which help our mechanical crews when riders report garbled messages or volume issues within a car.

7. Train radios transmit and receive information to and from our host railroads dispatcher. While each conductor has a hand held radio that work over short distances, the engineer has a hard wired radio in both the locomotive and the cab car that can reach the railroad dispatcher (in Halethorpe, MD for CSX and Greenville, SC for Norfolk Southern).

As you can see, this is not your grandparent's passenger car. The communications system is a very complex system of individual components that work together to provide a seamless system for crew and riders alike.

Just Who is Alex Sugatan?

Guaranteed Ride Home

What if you had to work past your normal quitting time and you missed the last train? Or what if your child falls ill and you need to get home moments after arriving at work when trains are not running in the direction that you need? Thanks to a regional, cooperative effort called "Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) there is a "safety net" in place that will guarantee you a ride home in the case of family illness, unscheduled overtime or an unusual emergency.

The program is free and available to all VRE passengers. The ride is paid for in full by GRH up-front, with no reimbursement by the commuter necessary.

To qualify for the GRH program, you must be pre-registered with the Council of Governments (COG). (Unregistered commuters can use GRH one time, but you must then register before you are eligible to use GRH again.)

To get a copy of the registration form mailed to you, call 1-800-745-RIDE. Or, visit the GRH Web site at www.mwcog.org/commuter/ccindex.html.

Alex Sugatan is VRE's current Network Administrator. He's been working for VRE for the past 6 months and he comes to us with 7 years IT experience. He says he likes IT because every day is a different challenge. He likes VRE because of the people (a very diplomatic thing to say) and because he loves not always having to be stuck in the office - getting the opportunity to get outside and travel to different stations and, of course, to ride the train. As a new employee to VRE, we thought we'd get to know him a little better. Yes, he has a background in computers, works at Gold's Gym in his spare time and (as his mother informs us) has a great personality. But deep down, who is he really? We thought we would find out.

If someone wrote a biography about you, what do you think the title should be?

"The Adrenaline Junkie. I love extreme sports or anything that gets my adrenaline pumping."

If you won \$20 million in the lottery, what would you do with the money?

"First, I would travel around the world. Then move to Maui and open a surf shop/beach bar. Then I would pay someone to run it while I run fishing/dive tours during the day."

Have you ever wiped peanut butter on a squirrel? If so, what was it's reaction?

"What?!?! No, but now I want to!"

What has better looking legs, a seagull or a chicken?

"A chicken. Because it looks better on my plate!"

How would you explain a database in three sentences to your eight year old nephew?

"A database is like the memory card on your Xbox. You can save your games progress and access it whenever you need it again. Now, go outside and play."

If we looked into your refrigerator right now, would we be shocked?

"Probably not, because I like to cook and I like keeping my fridge organized. It's always stocked with food - chicken breasts, shrimp and Salmon. I always have fresh fruits and veggies. And a variety of microbrews."

If you only had six months left to live, what would you do with the time?

"I would make a bucket list and try to do everything I've ever wanted to do within six months. I would probably need a nice size loan from the bank though."

Why are manhole covers round?

"So it doesn't fall through its circular opening. I was asked this question before and that's the only reason why I know this."

If you could be a superhero, what would you want your superpowers to be?

"I would want Superman's powers minus the whole kryptonite thing. If I had to choose one, I would want to fly. Imagine how much money you would save on gas."

If you were a car part, which part would you be and why?

"The engine control unit (ECU); because it controls just about everything."

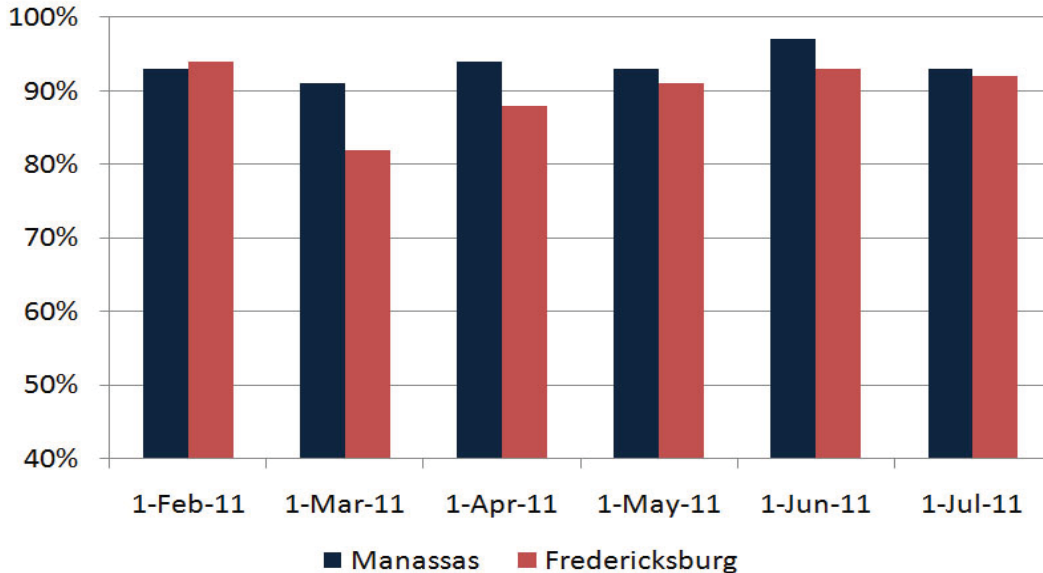
You are in a room with a vegetarian, a fruitarian and a librarian. Taking this into consideration, what do you think is the most important part of a sandwich?

"The bread. Without the bread, it's just not a sandwich?"

Thank you Mr. Sugatan. Welcome to VRE and may your Microbrews always be cold.

Commuter Connections has recently announced that registration for Car Free Day is now open at www.carfreemetrodc.com. The September 22, 2011 event is anticipated to be the largest Car Free Day yet. Car Free Day is a world-wide event that challenges everyone who drives a car, not just commuters. Event participants have an opportunity to explore alternative transportation modes or more efficient uses of their cars like sharing a ride to the shopping center, grocery store, or to school, and other daily activities. By taking the pledge to go Car Free or Car-Lite, on September 22, participants will be eligible to win great prizes such as an Apple iPad, a bicycle, SmarTrip Cards and more! Filling out the pledge form is free and easy at www.carfreemetrodc.com.

On Time Performance for the Last Six Months



On-Time Performance July 2011

Fredericksburg Line

300 – 100%
 302 – 100%
 304 – 100%
 306 – 100%
 308 – 100%
 310 – 100%
 312 – 100%

301 – 90%
 303 – 85%
 305 – 75%
 307 – 95%
 309 – 70%
 311 – 90%
 313 – 90%

Overall – 92%

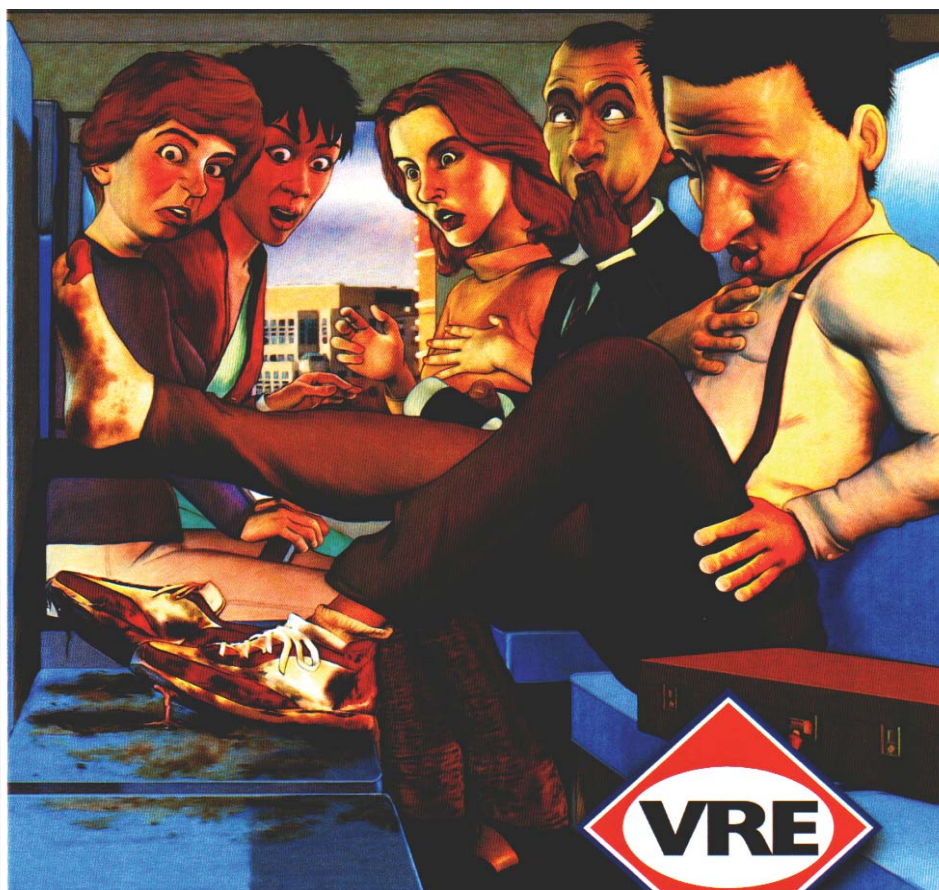
Manassas Line

322 – 100%
 324 – 100%
 326 – 100%
 328 – 100%
 330 – 95%
 332 – 100%
 336 – 80%
 338 – 90%

321 – 100%
 325 – 95%
 327 – 90%
 329 – 90%
 331 – 90%
 333 – 80%
 335 – 85%
 337 – 85%

Overall – 93%

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



Our plush interior was designed for your posterior, only. So please keep your feet on the floor.

works for me

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