Executive Summary
VRE Transit Development Plan

Overview

VRE is required by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) to update its Transit Development Plan (TDP) every six years as a condition of receiving state funding. The TDP provides an overview of VRE’s major projects and initiatives, outlines short-term priorities as well as constraints and communicates aspirations for the longer term.

This TDP encompasses two timeframes:

- A six-year (FY 2020-2025) fiscally-constrained plan that documents the funded projects and programmed initiatives; and
- A fiscally-unconstrained plan (FY 2026-2029) identifying proposed projects as well as current and longer-term unmet capital and operating needs. The fiscally-unconstrained plan affords an opportunity to connect ongoing and planned improvements to the aspirations outlined in the System Plan 2040.

The TDP outlines four types of service needs that exist today and are expected to increase in the future. The needs are: expanded train capacity, adjusted train times, more frequent service and attracting new riders in accordance with the long-range vision for the system.

Ridership Forecasts and Capacity Analysis

FY2020 – FY2025

Although regional population and job growth are projected to increase, ridership forecasts over the FY2020 – FY2025 timeframe reflect very modest growth of 1 percent per year across the system.

FY2026 – FY2029

A capacity analysis indicates by FY2030 the anticipated demand for the Fredericksburg Line is expected to exceed capacity even if all trains are lengthened to eight-cars. If trains were lengthened to the ten-car maximum, three trains would still not have enough seats to match demand.

On the Manassas Line, the busiest trains already have seven or eight cars. The analysis showed that extending these consists to ten cars would be enough to meet forecasted demand in FY 2030.

FY2020 – FY2025 Fiscally Constrained Plan

In this timeframe VRE addresses the need for additional seats by adding cars to existing trains on both the Fredericksburg and Manassas Lines. VRE’s short-term service goal is to extend Fredericksburg Line trains to 8-car trains. This will increase seating capacity consistent with increasing demand. Funding to acquire the requisite 11 coaches, including spares, has been awarded from the Commonwealth of Virginia’s SmartScale program. On the Manassas Line, trains will be extended to 10 cars with funding for 10 coaches awarded through the I-66 Outside the Beltway Concessionaire Payment. Yard expansions to accommodate the additional coaches are funded through the same sources.
The FY2020 – FY2025 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) also includes a variety of station, parking, and storage yard expansion projects as well as the acquisition of rolling stock mentioned above. Given current cost estimates, full funding of the projects in the FY2020 – FY2025 CIP will require approximately $813.5 million, of which $703.7 million (86.5%) is already committed. That total does not account for the pending Commonwealth Rail Enhancement Fund grant application and local match that, if successful, would allocate $44.53 million to complete funding for the Crystal City Station Project. Elements of the Broad Run Expansion Project, Woodbridge Station Improvements, and the L’Enfant Station Improvements are substantially funded.

**FY2026 – FY2029 Fiscally Unconstrained Plan**

The VRE Operations Board decided to limit capacity expansion to lengthening existing trains until sufficient sources of operating and capital funding are in place. Additional revenue sources will be pursued, informed by the currently underway updated financial analysis. An update to the System Plan 2040 will include development of a long-term service plan and companion financial component that identifies enough operating support and funding for capital infrastructure requirements. The TDP recommends incremental service plan modifications to achieve the long-term plan.

Some service planning concepts explored during this TDP update will be brought to the Operations Board for future consideration. These could include:

- Short turning trains to provide an additional peak period trip for the segments with the highest ridership demand.
- Adjusting the timing of existing trains to respond to customer preferences
- Modifying the service plan for Fridays when peak demand is considerably lower
- Incentivizing passengers to make more use of Amtrak cross honor or “step-up” trains by further subsidizing certain trains that bridge gaps in the VRE schedule
- Coordinating with PRTC and other existing transit or mobility providers to enhance the commute options for VRE riders. This could include providing more midday, off-peak or reverse commute options, especially an evening “sweeper bus” service after the last evening VRE train has departed.
- Adjusting fares for boarding at stations traditionally considered destination stations. This may also allow VRE segments to complement the currently oversubscribed Metrorail service.

Potential Capital Projects referenced as part of the FY 2026 –2029 Fiscally Unconstrained Plan include:

- Third track projects south of the Occoquan river.
- Yard expansions to store future new trains.