The Organization

The Virginia Railway Express (VRE) is a commuter rail service in Northern Virginia that is entering an exciting period of dramatic growth with the construction of a new Long Bridge over the Potomac River. VRE operates on two railroad lines originating near Fredericksburg and Manassas, Virginia and carries passengers to destination stations in Alexandria, Crystal City, and Union Station in Washington DC along the I-66 and I-95 corridors. Since operations began in 1992, VRE has grown to over 19,000 daily riders.

Headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, VRE is owned by the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) and the Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC). Member jurisdictions represented by the commissions include the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Prince William, Spotsylvania, and Stafford and the cities of Alexandria, Fredericksburg, Manassas, and Manassas Park. The commissions provide governance and oversight of the VRE and serve as a conduit for government funding. PRTC is the recipient of federal grants for commuter rail service; most state grants for commuter rail service flow through NVTC.

The parent commissions established the VRE Operations Board as a joint subcommittee charged with the coordination, creation, development, and operation of the Virginia Railway Express; the commissions have delegated significant operational powers and responsibilities to VRE. The VRE Operations Board consists of 16 members: 15 members appointed by the two commissions and one member representing the Virginia Secretary of Transportation.

VRE operates with a staff of 54 full-time employees and contracts for operations and maintenance functions. All non-contract staff are PRTC employees. The Fiscal Year 2021 operations budget is $91 million, with major sources of revenue including passenger revenues and funding from federal and state governments, the jurisdictions, and the Commuter Rail Operating and Capital Fund. The Fiscal Year 2021 capital budget is over $72 million.

In 2014, the VRE Operations Board adopted the System Plan 2040, a long-range plan that provides a framework for recommended VRE system investments and actions through 2040 to best meet regional travel needs to carry over 40,000 daily weekday trips by 2040.

The system investments and service expansion recommended in the System Plan 2040 will:

- Provide passengers with rolling stock, stations, and service maintained to the highest quality.
- Improve and expand service for current VRE passengers.
- Address emerging ridership markets.
- Advance VRE’s role as part of a multimodal regional mobility network.
- Invest in partnerships to add capacity in multi-use rail corridors.
The CEO Position

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) position is responsible for sustaining and growing VRE’s ridership, providing world class customer service, and for overall management of the agency, including safety and security which are of the highest priority. The position exercises executive leadership responsibilities in achieving VRE’s vision and strategic plan; establishing and maintaining effective relationships with the VRE Operations Board, the parent commissions and internal staff; and in maintaining and expanding cooperative relationships with the host railroads, CSX and Norfolk Southern and representatives of Amtrak, various transit connection services, regional emergency responder agencies, and federal, state, regional, and local government agencies. The CEO is a contract employee of both commissions and reports to the VRE Board. The CEO has four direct reports, the Deputy CEO and COO, the Chief Financial Officer, the Chief of Staff, and an Executive Administrative Assistant.

Major responsibilities of the CEO position include:

- Oversees and ensures accountability for overall management and coordination of administrative and legislative advocacy functions.

- Supports VRE’s governance structure and provides professional research, options, and recommendations by the VRE Operations Board, the two parent commissions, and local government sponsors, in cooperation with the commissions’ executive directors and others as necessary.

- Develops annual capital and operating budget guidelines; prepares and presents the proposed VRE budget and leads a cooperative effort to prepare revisions; seeks comments from local jurisdictions and secures approvals by the commissions and the jurisdictions.

- Updates and presents the multi-year financial plan and capital improvement plan to the VRE Operations Board.

- Assists in developing VRE requests for regional, state and federal financial assistance.

- Monitors expenditures against the adopted budget; updates the Board on financial reports and any financial management concerns; exercises fiduciary responsibility and ensures compliance with financial management procedures.

- Ensures strict adherence to VRE’s public transportation agency safety plan and transit asset management plan.

- Completes, maintains, and implements a strategic plan; provides periodic updates to major stakeholders.

- With considerable input from the VRE Operations Board and the two commissions, defines and advances a proposed legislative agenda.

- Oversees the VRE capital program and project delivery process.

- Manages existing railroad operating and access contracts and leads negotiations to revise and renew contracts.

- Exercises responsibility for human resource actions, including staffing, hiring, promoting, demoting, and terminating staff; provides oversight on human resources policies, administrative rules, and systems.

- Leads public outreach with both commissions and local staffs, elected officials, business leaders, media, consultants, citizens, and interest groups on transportation matters; represents VRE at conferences, regulatory proceedings, and hearings.
Candidate Profile

The successful candidate for this position is a forward-looking, big picture, transformational leader with deep experience in capital infrastructure and public sector operations. With a vision for the future of commuter rail service, the CEO brings the leadership, tenacity, passion, and commitment to manage growth in the dynamic context of intermodal transportation. An articulate champion for commuter rail, the CEO works collaboratively within the organization and with external partners to develop and execute realistic, achievable roadmaps.

Exercising responsible stewardship of VRE’s fiscal resources, ensuring VRE’s organizational culture supports staff diversity, creating a cohesive organization that works seamlessly across departments, and providing overall accountability are major facets of the position’s role. The CEO is skilled in working effectively through others to manage operations and deliver capital projects. In concert with the senior management team, the CEO establishes expectations for open, transparent communication, supporting diversity, respecting and hearing employee ideas and concerns, and providing employees with opportunities for ongoing professional and technical growth.

The CEO works effectively to promote VRE’s mission and strategic direction in a complex intergovernmental arena without taking political sides. With exceptional interpersonal and communication skills, the CEO demonstrates a keen ability to develop and balance a multitude of relationships among multijurisdictional communities, government agencies, and private sector organizations that share an interest in commuter rail. The CEO position is highly visible representing the VRE in a wide variety of public forums.

The position forges a trusted relationship with the VRE Operations Board, the parent commissions, and the jurisdictions they represent. The CEO actively engages the VRE Operations Board, providing timely information, insightful analyses, policy options, and well-reasoned recommendations. As VRE services expand, the CEO has the grit and determination to guide VRE’s growth, to navigate the organization through an ever-changing public transportation environment, and to generate a collective sense of pride and accomplishment among employees as the organization evolves. The CEO recognizes the importance of an organizational culture where employees understand how their role relates to VRE’s mission and feel appreciated and recognized for their contributions. The CEO provides aspirational leadership that inspires and motivates employees at all levels of the organization, fosters a highly collaborative and diverse work environment, and builds trust and credibility.
Leadership Opportunities

Strengthen the organizational culture. A strong organizational culture with shared beliefs and values helps an organization increase its performance and achieve results. The CEO will engage the VRE management team and employees to assess the organizational culture and define an action plan that builds trust and cooperation, supports diversity, increases morale, and creates organizational cohesiveness.

Stakeholder relationships. The successful operation of a commuter rail service depends upon building and sustaining relationships with many stakeholders. It will be a priority for the CEO to establish effective working relationships with the members of the VRE Operations Board, NVTC and PRTC officials, representatives of host railroads, jurisdictional staff, officials at the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, and federal, state, regional, and local elected officials. The CEO will also recognize riders as a significant constituency and identify ways to stay abreast of their concerns and issues.

Transforming rail service. A recently executed $3.7 billion agreement between the Commonwealth of Virginia and CSX Transportation will provide critical rail improvements, including $1.9 billion for construction of a new Long Bridge over the Potomac. These improvements will position VRE to make great strides towards implementing the System 2040 Plan. As a result of the agreement, the commonwealth will make infrastructure improvements, purchase right-of-way to provide a dedicated passenger rail corridor, and build the Long Bridge to alleviate congestion. The CEO will play a pivotal role in representing VRE in coordinating projects that expand VRE service and improve reliability.

Capital program delivery. Complex legal, financial, and compliance regulations and construction coordination have resulted in backlogs. The CEO will work with VRE’s management team to identify obstacles in managing capital projects and recommend process improvements to reduce backlogs. In addition, the CEO will recognize the importance of maintaining the system and extending the life of VRE equipment at its Lifecycle Overhaul and Upgrade Facility.

Continued attention to funding sources. The CEO will stay abreast of developments that could impact future intergovernmental funding for commuter rail. In developing future VRE budgets, the CEO will ensure a balance between meeting service needs, maintaining the system in a state of good repair, setting fares at a reasonable level, and incorporating new funding sources as required to achieve VRE’s strategic direction.
Qualifications and Experience

The CEO position requires extensive senior management experience in an organization of a comparable scale and scope of services and a master’s degree in organizational leadership, public administration, business administration, or a related field. Equivalent education and experience will be considered. Qualified candidates must demonstrate the ability to manage change, support diversity, and create a cohesive organizational culture. The position requires a strong working knowledge of the industry, high-level financial understanding, and a record of establishing effective partnerships with stakeholders. Experience managing multiple large projects is desired.

Compensation and Benefits

The salary for the position is negotiable dependent upon candidate education and experience and is aligned with the cost-of-living in the Washington DC metropolitan area. Benefits include but are not limited to participation in the Virginia Retirement System, vacation and sick leave, group life insurance, medical and dental insurance, professional dues and conference expenses. Relocation assistance is negotiable.

Application and Selection Process

Qualified candidates please submit your cover letter and resume online by visiting our website at:

https://bakertilly.recruitmenthome.com/postings/2559

This position is open until filled; first review of resumes occurs on April 1, 2020. Following this date, applications will be screened against criteria outlined in this brochure. For more information, please contact Sharon Klumpp at sharon.klumpp@bakertilly.com or 651-223-3053.

For more information about VRE, see its website at: https://www.vre.org/about/

The Virginia Railway Express (VRE) is an Equal Opportunity Employer and veterans are encouraged to apply.