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FUTURE ON-SITE VRE STATION
NEW YEAR, NEW COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

Some riders feel we send too many Train Talk e-mails, others say we don’t send enough ... while of course for others, we send just the right amount. As part of our New Year, New Communications efforts, we’re sending more update e-mails, however we’re also giving you more control over the type of information you receive from us. As we move further into 2019 and categorize our alert e-mails, you can more easily update your subscription preferences from the "subscription preferences" link in the footer of all Train Talk emails. If you’re someone who does not care to receive system VRE News, simply opt out. Or if you do not follow when a train’s GPS is not working, opt out of the support system notifications.

You’ll also notice this year that we're incorporating courtesy reminders, FAQs, and safety guidelines in Train Talk e-mails and into our social media posts. This is in response to rider requests, and we hope the additional exposure of the messages increases awareness of these topics among all riders.

Additionally, you may have noticed that our website, vre.org, has a new look. Our new menu allows you to dive deeper into our site with less clicks, and you can now get a quick overview of holidays, special events and more through the operational calendar on the homepage. Additional website improvements are coming, so please be on the lookout for those in the coming months.

Sincerely,

DOUG ALLEN
Chief Executive Officer
Virginia Railway Express
**Long Bridge**

**Study To Improve Railroad Capacity**

**What is the Long Bridge?**

The Long Bridge is the only railroad bridge connecting Virginia to Washington, D.C. As such, our trains must use the bridge between Crystal City, L’Enfant and Washington Union Station. This steel truss bridge built in 1904 has only two tracks, resulting in a system bottleneck with the competing rail time needs of CSX freight trains, Amtrak intercity passenger trains, and our commuter rail service.

**The Long Bridge Project**

The Long Bridge Project aims to provide additional railroad capacity as the need to increase the number of trains in the region grows, as well as improve the reliability of railroad service through the area. To address the capacity issues and improve resiliency long-term, the project consists of potential improvements to the Long Bridge and related railroad infrastructure located between the Rosslyn (RO) Interlocking near Long Bridge Park in Arlington, Virginia and the L’Enfant (LE) Interlocking near 10th Street SW in the District.

**Long Bridge and NEPA**

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions. NEPA is an “umbrella” law that encourages integrated compliance with other environmental laws so that a proposed project’s impacts are comprehensively evaluated before implementation.

The Long Bridge Project’s compliance with NEPA will include preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will be made available for public comment. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is the lead Federal agency for the EIS. The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is the local lead agency.
PROJECT ACTIVITY

In November 2018, the FRA and DDOT announced a project approach to be analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) currently under development. The DEIS will analyze retaining the current two-track bridge in addition to building a new two-track crossing upstream (from the existing bridge) – providing a total of four tracks in the Long Bridge corridor.

A separate bicycle and pedestrian bridge between the proposed new Long Bridge and the existing WMATA Yellow Line bridge will also be analyzed in an effort to mitigate impacts to publicly-owned park land.

VRE’S INVOLVEMENT

VRE is a cooperating agency in the environmental process and continues to collaborate with the FRA, DDOT, CSX Transportation (the owner of the bridge), and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation.

VRE will continue to work with the DEIS study partners, with the goal of publishing a Draft EIS in the Summer of 2019. This will be followed in the Spring of 2020 by a Final EIS and Record of Decision signaling the completion of the environmental process.

For more, visit:
longbridgeproject.com

DEIS Alternatives
Recommended

1. Satisfy Purpose and Need:  
a. Add railroad capacity  
b. Provide network connectivity  
c. Enhance Railroad resiliency and redundancy
2. Retain existing two track bridge and construct new two track bridge upstream. Estimated conceptual costs: $1.3 to $1.6 B; 5 years to construct
3. Potential Section 4(f) Mitigation

Mitigation

Construct new and independent bike/pedestrian crossing between new Long Bridge and existing WMATA Yellow Line bridge

Schedule

1. Publish Draft EIS Summer 2019
2. Publish Final EIS Spring 2020 and execute Record of Decision (Includes mitigation commitments)

Funding/Project Delivery Options

1. Identify project sponsor
2. Find funding for final design and construction
3. Explore project delivery options
A WORLD AT WAR ART EXHIBIT (FREE)
Through April
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
The National Museum of the Marine Corps,
18900 Jefferson Davis Hwy.,
Triangle, VA 22172
Learn more: usmcmuseum.com

WASHINGTON’S MONUMENTS CRUISE TO THE
CHERRY BLOSSOMS
Recurring weekly on Saturday and Sunday until April 28
Departs from Cameron & Union Streets, Alexandria, VA
Traverse the Potomac River from Old Town Alexandria and cruise past the cherry blossoms in Washington, D.C. on the Washington's Monuments Cruise by Potomac Riverboat Company. View and listen to the history of the iconic monuments, memorials and bridges as the D.C. region awakens to spring. See beautiful cherry blossom trees as you glide past Hains Point and head onward to Georgetown. The cruise is 45 minutes one-way and approximately 90 minutes round-trip and is offered Saturdays and Sundays beginning March 23, 2019 and throughout peak cherry blossom season.

OCCOQUAN PEEP SHOW (FREE)
April 20 from 11 AM - 4 PM
Over 20 businesses display creative dioramas using Easter peeps. Visit each participating shop (designated with yellow balloons) to view what amazing things the peeps will be doing and vote for your favorite display! Hosted by the Occoquan Merchant Guild. The Town invites the Occoquan community to participate in crafting and displaying their own Peep diorama creations with the Town of Occoquan Community Peeps Contest! Winners will receive a $25 gift certificate to any business in town!

ONE LOVE: CELEBRATION OF LIFE WITH THE
ARTS (FREE)
April 26 from 6:00 PM - 10:00 PM
One Love is a trans-formative 3-day multi-media art event that is a celebration of life and our diverse artistic community. The event is designed to give artists a platform to perform, share and leverage their art to the betterment of the community, while raising awareness and inspiring hope for the love of all artistic platforms.

PROJECTS FOR THE RIDE ...
TO KNIT OR CROCHET?

One of our conductors asked us to write a story about the types of projects people do while riding the train. He commented he’s seen a number of people over the years knitting, crocheting, and working on needlepoint projects. Here’s a shout out to our experienced crafters onboard – way to enjoy your ride by creating something!

If you’re not yet using your ride to craft, but would like to, we’d like to offer some insight on the differences between knitting and crocheting to help guide your choice on a first project.

**Knitting**

Both knitting and crocheting use yarn, but knitting is done with two knitting needles and the stitches are loops. Knitting can be easier to learn than crocheting, and produces smaller stitches. Only two stitch types are used: the knit and purl. The process requires moving stitches from one needle to the other, then back again. Knitting requires patience, but many patterns are available.

**Crocheting**

Crocheting is performed with just one crochet hook and the stitches look bumpier than knitting. Crochet stitches build from each other and range from short and small to tall and twisty. The most common stitches are the single crochet and double crochet stitches. Crocheting is perfect for creative types who don’t mind making mistakes.

**SHARE WITH US! #VRECRAFTS**
Fredericksburg sits on the banks of the Rappahannock, at the head of river navigation, which has made it an important site since colonial times. The Virginia General Assembly established a fort in the area in 1676, just south of the present city. In 1720, the Assembly established a new county, Spotsylvania (after the governor) and established Fredericksburg in 1728 as a river port for the 18th-century settlers. Named for Frederick, Prince of Wales, son of George II, the streets bore names of the royal family.

The city is closely associated with George Washington, whose family moved in 1738 to a farm in Stafford County, across the Rappahannock from Fredericksburg, so that Augustine Washington could live closer to the Accokeek Creek Iron Furnace, which he managed. The house—uncovered finally in an archaeological dig in July 2008—was central to the Washington family from the 1740s until 1772, when Mary Washington moved across the river to Fredericksburg.

Rail service has been important in Fredericksburg since the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad (RF&P) was chartered in 1834 to run a line from Richmond up to the Potomac River at Aquia Creek. The original Fredericksburg train station was a ground-level stationhouse, and the area adjacent to the tracks was once Fredericksburg’s industrial and commercial corridor.

Throughout the Civil War, control of the railroad through Fredericksburg was of strategic importance due to its position midway between Washington, D.C. and Richmond, Virginia, the opposing capitals.

During the Battle of Fredericksburg in early December of 1862, the town sustained significant damage due to bombardment and looting at the hands of Federal troops, who were in turn devastated at Confederate hands. After the war, Fredericksburg recovered its position as a center of local trade and expanded.

By 1872, rail connections went through to Washington, D.C., giving this portion of Virginia an all-rail route from Richmond and across the Potomac to Washington.

Concerned about rapid and safe transport of goods during World War I, the Federal Government established the Railway Express Agency (REA) in 1917 to utilize existing railroad for small package and parcel transit. The REA expanded rapidly with small offices across the country, and with railroads as a catalyst for then-modern concepts like standardization of time through time zones and accelerated delivery, many came to depend on the REA for their shipping needs.

The Fredericksburg REA office was constructed around 1927, replacing a two-story wood frame American Railway Express Depot structure and taking on an odd shape as a result of a spur line that branched off the main rail line. Fredericksburg’s REA office, or better known as the “Railway Express Depot,” used the nearby RF&P tracks until REA dissolved in 1975.

The “Fredericksburg Railway Express Depot” is one in a series of railroad buildings that represents an era of unprecedented national interconnection. The RF&P railroad company buildings in Fredericksburg included architectural detailing reflecting the prosperity and dominance of the railroad in the national economy. The Railway Express Depot, however, was more utilitarian and traditional for a train/warehouse district, although the building exhibits excellent brickwork. The exterior of the building remains relatively unchanged, and the interior has been renovated within the city’s historical guidelines.

The Railway Express Depot is recognized as a contributing building to the Fredericksburg Historic District. The Fredericksburg Historic District is listed on both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Today, Fredericksburg is a rapidly growing region in Northern Virginia; however, it still retains its 40-block historic district. For example, one block from the Rappahannock River waterfront, sits the 1910 brick railroad station structure built by the RF&P, which has most recently been occupied by the German restaurant, Bavarian Chef. This, along with the surrounding memorial battlefield monuments has led Fredericksburg to be aptly nicknamed, “America’s most historic city.” RF&P was succeeded by CSX after the RF&P ceased operating in 1991.
VRE MOBILE UPDATE

VRE is currently working with developers on an updated version of our mobile app, VRE Mobile, to be released later this year. The refreshed app will feature:

- Protection against accidental validation of multiple tickets
- More intuitive process for purposeful multiple ticket validation
- Improved ticket purchase flow

Plus, the app will be designed to more quickly introduce future updates like transportation options and fares for the first and last mile of a trip.

On a related note, we’re happy to announce the much awaited results of the Rate My Ride survey at: vre.org/RateMyRide. Please continue to rate us in VRE Mobile, and check the webpage for monthly updates on how we’re scoring.

To schedule a phone appointment with a VRE representative, E-mail: gotrains@vre.org or call: 703-684-1001
**RECENT ONLINE FORUM ACTIVITY**

**Is that bridge slowing us down fixed yet?**
VRE Response: If you are referring to the bridge on Track 1 south of Alexandria, it was replaced and back in service in mid December.

**If I can get WiFi on an airplane, why is it impossible on the VRE?**
VRE Response: The dead spots throughout our service area which you experience when trying to use your cell phone would create an inconsistent, poor quality WiFi experience. We’ll look at WiFi when a viable solution for the poor coverage can be found.

**The yellow steps for the short platforms … they are often stashed in the luggage rack.**
VRE Response: The step boxes should be stored in the luggage rack, however, if the space is needed, the conductor will move it to another location.

**Can we have more trains running at different times? Why does it (service) stop going into DC at 8:25am?**
VRE Response: Thanks for the questions Jessica. Our current schedules are set-up to match the peak demand for commuters. While we are always reevaluating the service, we have not seen enough demand either later in the mornings for inbound service, or later in the evenings for return service.

**Have questions? Join VRE’s Online Forum the first Wednesday of each month at noon. vre.org/chatterbox**

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**Philharmonic Orchestra**

Dr. Kevin P. Bartram, Music Director

Gustav Holst’s

**THE PLANETS**

with guest narrator

LeVar Burton

Saturday, March 23

7:30 pm

Dodd Auditorium

UMW Campus

Tickets Now On Sale

For tickets, visit umwphilharmonic.com or call 540/654-1324
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Contact:
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(703) 838-5417

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

Ideas, Likes, Critiques? RIDE Magazine Online Survey:
vre.org/ridesurvey
There’s plenty to love at Potomac Shores. Like award-winning homes. Our Shores Club social and rec center. Sports fields, parks and trails. And a close-knit community of residents enjoying events and experiences that make it feel like you belong to one great, big happy family.

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