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FROM THE CEO

VIRGINIA’S PLANS FOR EXPANDED PASSENGER SERVICE

The start of 2020 brings with it the promise of expanded and improved rail service over the course of the next decade. A recently announced agreement between CSX Transportation, one of our host railroads, and the Commonwealth of Virginia will enhance our riders’ commutes through increased options and greater reliability. While the $3.7 billion package will transform passenger rail service in the I-95 corridor, it will be almost 10 years before this ambitious plan is realized. There will, however, be some near- and mid-term improvements.

The commonwealth’s plan to deal with increasing train congestion is to separate freight and passenger rail in the corridor by constructing a dedicated passenger-rail bridge over the Potomac River, additional tracks in areas north of Lorton, a Franconia-to-Springfield bypass for passenger trains, and six sidings to allow trains to pass. Alleviating congestion will improve reliability for all VRE trains, as those on the Manassas Line use this corridor between Alexandria and L’Enfant in the District of Columbia. Separating the two rail services provides new capacity that could allow us to run more trains and provide weekend service.

Once CSX and Virginia finalize their agreement, expected sometime toward the end of this year, VRE will look at adding new roundtrip trains. Additional service could be phased in beginning in 2026, as infrastructure improvements are completed. Details regarding late evening and weekend trains are being worked out.

VRE is not the only beneficiary of this agreement, which allows Virginia to acquire about half of the railroad right-of-way owned by CSX between Richmond and the District. State-supported Amtrak service is expected to double, with trains running almost hourly between the two cities. Look for a new roundtrip Amtrak train to begin service late this year connecting Norfolk, Richmond, and D.C.

VRE is committed to bringing this plan to fruition and is considering ways to help fund the design and construction of a new passenger rail bridge over the Potomac. In December, VRE’s Operations Board directed staff to explore financial contribution options for the project. In the meantime, we will move ahead on several station improvement projects and railcar procurements that will allow VRE to run longer trains on both lines.

The prospect of providing improved and expanded passenger rail service to the region is exciting. Look for additional details via VRE Train Talks, RIDE magazine and vre.org as we move through 2020.

Rich Dalton, Acting CEO
VRE UPDATE

**PIDs to Include Amtrak Arrivals & More**

If you ride from the Fredericksburg Station, you may have noticed a few new monitors lately. The monitors are part of a Proof of Concept (POC) project to upgrade and modernize the Variable Messaging System (VMS). VRE's IT Department has been working diligently with Amtrak's Passenger Information Display System (PIDS) team for well over a year to bring this project to fruition. The VRE/Amtrak joint VMS POC project aims to address some age-old challenges at both the Fredericksburg and Alexandria Stations.

The project addresses several areas of improvement:

1. **ADA accessibility** – as many passengers know, when an incoming Amtrak train is approximately 5 minutes out, the conductor dials in to the PA system and makes a track announcement at the Fredericksburg Station. Passengers will queue in the tunnel under the station and wait for the track number announcement and hope a freight train is not traveling through when the announcement is made. Once they hear the announcement, they head to the proper track for the train. One problem is the Amtrak announcements are not converted to text on the screen for passengers who have difficulty hearing.

2. **What track is my train on?** Fredericksburg and Alexandria stations provide service for both Amtrak and VRE. Passengers traveling to/from both stations have this pretty consistent question as track arrival numbers vary at these busy stations.

3. **Connecting Transit** – both the Alexandria and Fredericksburg stations are transit hubs, where connecting service is available and used by many of our riders. The VMS POC system will integrate connecting transit feeds (where available) for passengers riding to/from the Alexandria and Fredericksburg stations.

4. **Like Airport Monitors** – merge Amtrak and VRE data together on one system like what travelers see when arriving at the airport.

The new system will boast several features such as more new, larger, higher quality VMS screens. If you ride to/from the Fredericksburg station, you've probably noticed the new screens that have been up and running for a few weeks now. The new screens in Fredericksburg have been totally redesigned to provide real-time arrival data. While we are currently displaying Amtrak's schedule, look very soon to see updated departure times and those long awaited track numbers!

The VMS POC project provides ADA accessible (audio and visual) information for not only VRE trains like what exists today but integrates Amtrak’s trains into the system similar to what passengers find in airports. The new data will include trains listed in order by scheduled departure time and includes train number, route, destination, status (on-time or adjusted departure time) and the long-awaited track number. Lastly, the new screen will have a new linear map. This map is one of the more challenging pieces of this pie and will not be operational until development is finished.

The new screen redesign will also be more transit friendly by offering real-time connecting transit information at Alexandria Station for DASH (Alexandria's transit) and WMATA (Metrobus and Metrorail). We will do the same at Fredericksburg when a feed becomes available for Fredericksburg Transit (FRED).

As the current construction is wrapping up at the Alexandria station, we will begin installing additional screens and the new system. Look for this work to begin shortly.

These screens at the Fredericksburg station will soon display new information!
COMMUNICATION SURVEY UPDATE

In the past issue of RIDE, we discussed the results of our October Communication Survey as well as plans to make improvements based on your feedback. In addition to increasing the frequency of our Train Talk alerts and providing more details in our service disruption follow ups last year, we also announced plans for other communication-related projects including coordinating with conductors, installing new station monitors, and utilizing a new provider for our email and text alerts. Find updates below on these efforts as well as new events for this year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outlet</th>
<th>Description of Improvement</th>
<th>Update</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-board Updates</td>
<td>We have worked with our mechanical crews to improve the inspection process of the train car speakers, and worked with the conductors to make more frequent, clear updates.</td>
<td>Not only did we work with the conductors on the process for relaying delay information, we have also started sending weekly updates to the conductors so they stay informed about various service-related projects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Station Monitors</td>
<td>We are testing a new Variable Messaging System for platform monitors at Fredericksburg and Alexandria to include displaying Amtrak train information and other transit data.</td>
<td>Find more PIDS project details on the page to the left.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train Talk Alerts</td>
<td>We’re transitioning to a new mass communications service for Train Talks with the goal of providing more information, faster upon reaching full system potential.</td>
<td>We are transitioning to a mass communication service called Everbridge. Though you may continue to receive Train Talk alerts without updating your preferences, you may wish to also install the Everbridge app. The Everbridge app will show VRE updates, plus alerts from many other organizations and transit agencies in our region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>To complement our Meet the Management events this spring, we will be holding a series of other in-person events.</td>
<td>We will be holding Open House events at our headquarters in Alexandria. Each event will last approximately one hour and will be scheduled around noon to accommodate participation during typical lunch breaks. Indicate your interest in participating at vre.org/openhouse. Space is limited.</td>
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NEW RIDER TIPS

- Stay informed of delays, VRE news and more by signing up for email or text Train Talk alerts at vre.org.
- Check realtime train status on vre.org/status or Google Maps, however, don’t arrive late to your station if your train is experiencing a delay. Most often trains can make up time en route.
- Our 7-Day passes are good for seven consecutive calendar days once validated, so if you are purchasing a ticket for a week that includes a holiday, purchase a 10-Ride ticket instead.
- Do not put your bag in the seat beside you while other passengers are looking for a place to sit. Place your bag in your lap, under your seat, or on the overhead racks.
- Some stations require you to move to a different car to detrain. Your conductor will make an announcement if you need to move through the train before exiting.
A landmark agreement between the Commonwealth of Virginia and CSX Transportation will allow the Virginia Railway Express (VRE) to significantly expand service and improve reliability on the Fredericksburg and Manassas lines over the next decade. Infrastructure improvements and property acquisition by the commonwealth will result in a dedicated passenger rail corridor between Lorton, Virginia and the District of Columbia. A second rail bridge over the Potomac River, to be built and owned by the commonwealth, will remove one of the largest rail bottlenecks on the East Coast. Other proposed infrastructure improvements include construction of a third track between Lorton and Franconia-Springfield, a Franconia-to-Springfield bypass for passenger trains, a fourth track between Alexandria and the river, and six sidings throughout the corridor to allow trains to pass. The rail improvement package is estimated to cost $3.7 billion.

**IN THE NEAR-TERM**

**BY 2024**

- **the ability to add:**
  - 1 additional weekday roundtrip VRE train per line
    
    *Addition of a weekday roundtrip train on both the Fredericksburg and Manassas lines once the agreement between Virginia and CSX is finalized, which could come as soon as late 2020 or early 2021*

- **the ability to add:**
  - 1 additional Amtrak train
    
    *Addition of a Norfolk to Washington, D.C. Amtrak train, with stops in Fredericksburg, Quantico, Woodbridge and Alexandria.*

- **NEW**
  - Section of track dedicated to passenger trains & bridge design
    
    - Completion of a third track, for use by passenger trains, from just south of Lorton toward Franconia-Springfield.
    - Completion of design for second rail bridge over the Potomac River.
... THEN

BY 2026 the ability to add:

- **Saturday**
  - 2 weekend roundtrip VRE trains on both lines
  - Addition of two weekend roundtrip trains on both the Fredericksburg and Manassas Lines.

- 2 additional weekday roundtrip VRE trains per line
  - Addition of two weekday roundtrip trains on the Fredericksburg Line and three on the Manassas Line.

- 1 additional Amtrak train
  - Addition of a daily Newport News to Washington, D.C. Amtrak train, with stops in Fredericksburg, Quantico, Woodbridge and Alexandria.

MORE

Sections of new track dedicated to passenger trains & new bridge

- Completion of a third track just north of Fredericksburg, past Leeland Road; a passenger rail bypass south of Franconia-Springfield; a fourth track south of Alexandria to the Potomac River.

- Construction of a second rail bridge over the Potomac River.

... AND FINALLY

BY 2030 the ability to add:

- 2 additional roundtrip VRE trains on the Fredericksburg line

- 3 additional Amtrak trains
  - Addition of three Richmond to Washington, D.C. Amtrak trains, with stops in Fredericksburg, Quantico, Woodbridge and Alexandria.

REALIZATION

of dedicated route for passenger trains along the I-95 corridor

Completion of third tracks just north of Brooke, between the Crossroads yard and Spotsylvania, and between Rippon and Woodbridge; a fourth track and station improvements at L’Enfant; and a second rail bridge over the Potomac River.
Coming fresh off the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan and Washington D.C.’s recent addition of the “Old Glory” professional team to Major League Rugby, we turn to a sport that, like VRE, is dependent on its surrounding communities.

To the uninitiated, rugby may appear to be organized chaos (minus the organization) but its objective is simple; move the ball forward by passing it backward. Behind the scenes, however, there are complicated rules and techniques, and a culture of sportsmanship that needs to be taught at every level. As a club sport, local community involvement is essential in making that happen. “Communities contribute the raw materials that will eventually field a team,” says Steve “Duma” Johnson of the DumaTech Rugby Institute (DTRI). “They provide coaching, schedule matches and provide equipment through sponsorship and donations. We, then, take things to the next level. Our goal is to provide players with a pathway to professional sports in the mid-Atlantic region. We bring in coaches and host rugby camps to expose players to colleges and potential overseas opportunities. This gives kids access to rugby and provides them with a chance to grow as young people.”

And what do local communities gain in return? “Compared to any other sport or group activity, rugby is unparalleled for the values it teaches players,” says Packy Griffin, President of the Washington Irish Men’s Rugby club. “Those that play are often most recognized for their respect, accountability, and camaraderie, traits that shine through as players come up in the culture. When you get familiar with a team or club, it’s pretty apparent that the sport is influential.

**COMMUNITY FOCUS:**

**RUGBY**

**THE 7-DAY PASS:**

**SERVICE OR CALENDAR DAYS?**

The 7-Day Pass is good for seven consecutive calendar days once validated. So, rather than counting the number of service days after you validate, use your calendar to track which days your ticket will be honored.

**Does the 7-Day Pass factor weekend days?**

While VRE does not currently operate on weekends, the 7-Day Pass does tally both weekends and holidays as it counts down the number of valid days. The image below shows examples of when a ticket is activated and when it will expire.

**What about weeks that include holidays?**

We recommend purchasing a 10-Ride Ticket when a holiday is approaching rather than a 7-Day Pass. If you use a 7-Day Pass during a week with a holiday, the ticket cost is the same as four Day Passes. You won’t be at a loss with the 7-Day Pass, but it won’t provide the best value.
Anyone who has ever played rugby knows that there is a numbered position or role specifically fit for you. It is an inclusive sport with a need for diversity. To play or to support your local rugby community, here are some contacts:

- **DumaTech Rugby Institute (DTRI):** dumatech.com/
- **Rugby Tots:** rugbytotsusa.com
- **Alexandria Rugby:** alexandriarugby.com
- **TC Williams Rugby:** tcwathletics.org
- **Washington Irish Rugby Football Club:** washingtonirishrfc.org
- **DC Old Glory:** oldglorydc.com
- **NOVA Rugby:** novarugby.com
- **Northern Virginia Women’s Rugby Club:** novawrfc.org
- **Prince William County Rugby Football Club:** pwcrfc.com
- **Washington Scandals RFC:** scandalsrfc.org
- **West Potomac Rugby:** westpotrugby.com

**Western Suburbs Rugby Football Club:** rugbyfootball.com

**Rappahannock Rugby Football Club:** rappahannockrugby.com

**Arlington Stallions Rugby Club:** arlingtonstallionsrugby.com

**Daniel O’Connells Restaurant:** danieloconnells.com

**Washington D.C. Women’s Rugby Club:** dcfuries.com

Mark your calendar. This year, Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day is **Thursday, April 23.**

The 2020 theme – Meet the Workplace Superstars – can be translated as kids seeing how people on every level are important, how employees are superstars as they make the workplace successful, and of course, how the kids are the future superstars!

Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day is an opportunity to not only show your child what you do at work, but also how you get there using public transportation. Naturally, we believe in the importance of a lower-stress, more energy-efficient commute, and as such, we’re extending the age limits of who may ride free as part of the program. So while children 10 and under ride VRE free every day, VRE also invites future superstars between the ages of 11 and 18 who are accompanied by a paying adult to ride free on April 23.
Our trains are designed to safely allow passengers to stand. Naturally, however, most riders would rather sit and read, listen to music, or watch movies.

Many riders have adopted routines and typically ride the same trains each day. These routines have resulted in some trains being full on a regular basis with some riders standing for several stops, while other trains run with available seats.

For riders who have flexible work schedules and would like a seat from the start of their trip until the end, we encourage you to visit our website to learn which trains tend to be more full than others: vre.org/flex

Additionally, there may be other advantages to riding the presently underutilized trains. Our midday trains and the later evening trains allow passengers to bring full size bicycles onboard (please see our website to review bicycle policies). Plus, the later evening trains accommodate going to dinner after work with coworkers before heading home.
RAIL TIME PUZZLES

ACROSS
1 Embarrassing commotion
6 Do as you're told
10 Bit of land in a river
15 55 bills
19 First in Who's Who in the Bible
20 Andean nation
21 Vacuum "feature"
22 Women's touring org.
23 Beef cut
25 Beef cut
27 Military guardians
28 Goes on the lam
30 Have no use for
31 Ship's cargo area
32 Buttercup cousin
33 "And away _ I"
34 Find believable
37 Diagnoses (as noun or verb)
38 Bite-size sandwich
42 Linger
43 Farewell, at a trattoria
45 Detrimental
46 Close (approach)
47 Unalterable destiny
48 Mine extractions
49 High-debt Wall St. deals
50 Needing a fill-up
51 California almond brand
55 British blade
56 Camping accommodations
58 not amused
59 Western watering hole
60 Orchestral contingent
61 Shoppers' references
63 Journalist Ferrow
65 Legendary Indy champ
66 Ships before payment

9 Male whales
70 Stuffed fungal fare
72 "I'll take that as _"
73 No longer fuzzy
74 A fifth of MX
75 Transmission selection
76 Aware of
77 Intention
78 Cylindrical lunch
82 Nation split in 2011
83 Meadowlark cousin
85 Real Time host on HBO
86 Input again
87 Charter NATO member
90 Crooner's rendition
91 As _ resort
94 Most miscellaneous
98 Fried side
100 Vodka/cranberry juice cocktail
102 Imately
103 These, to Ruiiz
105 What surrounds some yards
106 Become entangled
107 Rouseau
108 Poetic lament
109 Bands of brothers

9 Barrel of laughs
10 Fervid
11 Hog call
12 Swim meet practice
13 for Evidence
14 What pais look like
15 Very, unfortunately
16 Lodge letters
17 Auspices
18 Director Guu Van _
24 Riverbank buildup
26 Aqua _ (strong acid)
28 Adversary of the Avengers
31 Handled clumsily
33 up (got smart)
34 Slanted
35 Transport for Hwasothar
36 Multi-rack roast
37 Spots of dust
38 Battle river of 1914
39 Yuilelde confection
40 Spanish gold
41 Clark Kent colleague
42 Modern measures
44 Half of 55 Down
47 Admiral's armada
49 Much of "Dock the Balls"
51 Hip-hop dudes
52 "In my wild dreams"
53 Norse pantheon
54 San _ (Palo Alto neighbor)
55 Stock stat source, for short
57 Hose-clamp fastener
59 Underwater tracker
61 Vision correction
62 Postgame summary
63 90s Britcom
64 Pop singer Iglesias

65 GM make since 1908
66 Mascara mishap
67 Available if needed
68 Lorna of literature
70 Banquet job
71 Grouchy ones
74 Small fry
76 Nonmember
78 With no tickets, as a driver's license
79 Diplomatic establishment
80 Puts the collar on
81 ... gonna do about it?
82 Keep anyone from entering
84 Rectangular shape
85 UCLA marching program
86 Math procedures, for short
89 Dutch South Africans
90 Bounces about
91 Common quote attribution
92 Euro predecessor in Palermo
93 Prefix like contra-
94 Bestower of PO's and R's, formerly
95 Novelist O'Brien
96 Splinter group
97 Low numero
99 Prefix like equi-
101 Verizon's ISP

SUDOKU

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"OK, kids, this is the moment we've been preparing for."
Help control the spread of germs:

- Consider staying home.
- Avoid touching your mouth and nose.
- Carry tissues, hand sanitizer, and cough drops.
- Cover your mouth. Cough and sneeze into tissues or the bend of your elbow.