Healthier living is part of today’s American Dream. And it’s a routine that’s easy to get into at our new Fitness Barn, with advanced cardio equipment and free weights, as well as a movement studio, yoga garden and 8-lane competition pool. Come discover Potomac Shores’ award-winning homes, exciting amenities, and all the ways for you to be your healthiest and happiest.

Recreation Center with Swimming Pools (Now Open)
On-Site Elementary School (2017)
Future On-Site VRE Train Stop
Hiking & Biking Trails
Jack Nicklaus Signature Golf Course & Clubhouse
30 Miles from DC with Two Miles of Shoreline

Homes from the $300s to $900s
703-640-3975

PotomacShores.com

Features and products vary by community. Price, offers, financing and availability are subject to change without notice.
Legacy Cars Approach Retirement

In the coming weeks, the last of what we affectionately refer to as our Legacy Cars will make their final runs in Northern Virginia. Our Legacy Cars were in service with us for 16 years, and many of you were VRE riders when they were introduced into our system. They were the first gallery-style cars with the top-level single-row seating that provided more capacity and a greater comfort level over our inaugural single-level cars.

Introducing these cars at the turn of the millennium represented a considerable achievement by our staff, and the riders at the time were as excited about their debut as we were. These cars – our first bi-level cars – started us down the path of a new product that we have followed. They allowed us to begin growing capacity and ridership, and they gave us time to modernize the fleet. As our newest cars assume their positions in the system, the Legacy Cars can now be retired.

Thanks to our excellent maintenance program, these older cars remained in exceptional condition through thousands of passenger runs. Though retiring from the VRE system, we expect these cars will run for many years to come with care similar to what our mechanical team provided.

Sincerely,

DOUG ALLEN
Chief Executive Officer
Virginia Railway Express
COMMUNITY EVENTS

9th Annual Taste of Del Ray Food Festival
June 4, 2017 from 1-3 p.m.
Admission: $10 adults; $5 children
Mt. Vernon Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22301
Mark your calendars, clean your palates and prepare to taste some of the yummiest flavors ever at the 9th Annual Taste of Del Ray, sponsored by the Del Ray Business Association. Top neighborhood restaurants will participate in this delicious competition taking place at the Pat Miller Neighborhood Square and the adjacent United Bank parking lot, located at the intersection of Mount Vernon Avenue and Oxford Avenue. Learn more: www.visitdelray.com

Liberia Plantation Tours
June 10, 2017 from 2-4 p.m.
Admission: $10
8601 Porter Avenue, Manassas, VA 20110
Through the words and stories of re-enactors and museum staff, experience this almost 200-year-old house come to life with lawn activities, house tours, and Civil War graffiti. To purchase tickets, visit Echoes Online Store, call 703-368-1873 or visit Echoes, the Manassas Museum store for tickets. Learn more: www.visitmanassas.org

Picnic In The Park
June 13, 2017 from 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Admission: Free
Hurkamp Park, Prince Edward Street, Fredericksburg, VA 22401
Enjoy a free, live lunchtime concert in Hurkamp Park. Bring a lunch to enjoy while listening to the music by Scott Kurt. There will also be children’s activities. Additional information at: www.visitfred.com

Father & Daughter Dance
June 17, 2017 from 6-9 p.m.
Admission: $30
Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center, 3740 Old Lee Hwy, Fairfax, VA 22030
Join us for magical evening at the Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center for the Father & Daughter Dance! Girls dress in their beautiful gowns and dads dress to impress. Special fairy-tale guests, so don’t miss out. Girls celebrate Fathers Day with your dads, Granddads, Big Brothers, God Fathers and Family members. There will be lots of dancing, games, prizes and good food.
Learn more: www.fairfax.gov

Fort Ward Civil War Camp Day
June 10, 2017 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.
Admission: Free; $5 suggested donation
Fort Ward Museum & Historic Site
4301 W. Braddock Rd., Alexandria, VA 22304
Union and Confederate reenactors interpret Civil War military activities in camp settings, present drills, infantry and artillery demonstrations, and civilian impressions. Learn more: www.alexandriava.gov/fortward

MANASSAS RAILWAY FESTIVAL

ON SALE MAY 2ND $5.00 TICKETS AT THE TRAIN STATION

SATURDAY JUNE 3, 2017 10:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

TRAIN TIMES
10:00 A.M.
11:00 A.M.
12:00 P.M.
1:00 P.M.

Board the Scenic Excursion Train at the Manassas Train Depot and enjoy a leisurely ride to Clifton and back.
CRYSTAL CITY: PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE STATION LOCATION

Issue:

The Crystal City station is one of VRE’s busiest stations, and yet its existing platform is only 400 feet long, has only one access point, and serves only one track. The platform experiences crowding when passengers are waiting to board, as well as when they alight from trains. The length and location of the platform causes an operational bottleneck impacting both lines on the system. To compound these issues, there is also a need for expanded service as the population of Crystal City is forecasted to grow 77% by 2040, and jobs by 30%.

What’s Needed:

We are working to identify a new location in Crystal City for an expanded station with a longer platform served by two tracks. The key objectives of relocating the station are:

- Contribute to increasing the train capacity of this section of the railroad, allowing VRE to run more and longer trains in the future
- Provide an easy transfer to Metrorail, Metroway, and local bus service
- Provide safe access for bicycles and pedestrians
- Minimize community and environmental impacts
- Align with Crystal City’s vision for growth

Get Involved:

Three proposed options for the station location and the evaluation factors were published on the project website on March 27, 2017. The results of the evaluation and the recommended station location are anticipated to be available for review and comments in early June. VRE welcomes feedback from the public – including VRE riders, Crystal City residents and businesses, and area employees.

Visit the VRE Crystal City Station Improvements project website for upcoming public events and other updates: www.vre.org/development/crystal-city-station-improvements

FIRST BIRTHDAY ON VRE

Last month, young rider Colton celebrated his first birthday with his mom Brianna and his friends onboard Fredericksburg’s 311. A special thanks to Sherri Harding for sharing the party pictures!

Happy 1st Birthday, Colton!

A THANKS TO FELLOW RIDERS

Lori Newton would like to thank a few unnamed riders for coming to her aid earlier this month.

Lori wrote to us:

“Good afternoon. I am writing to reach out to you as a means of saying thank you to some of your riders.

On Monday, May 8, 2017 I took VRE train 312 from Leeland Road to Union Station. Upon exiting the training and coming up the escalator at Union Station, I some how managed to fall. I recently had knee surgery and was very concerned about whether or not I had injured my knee as it was the leg I had landed on.

There were several riders who immediately came to assist me. I did not receive any names nor would I be able to provide a description of those individuals. I was not sure if there was a way that you could make a post that I appreciated their assistance more than they will ever know. There are many great individuals in this world and I am happy to know that they are riding among us on your train.”

We would also like to thank these passengers for going above and beyond to help a fellow rider in need.
JUNE 29-JULY 4 AND JULY 6-9, 2017
ON THE NATIONAL MALL BETWEEN 7TH & 12TH STREETS
FREE
FEATURED PROGRAMS: CIRCUS ARTS & MIGRATION ACROSS GENERATIONS
FESTIVAL.SI.EDU  #50YEARSOFFOLK
VRE’S BUDGET CYCLE

Summer
Each summer we begin preparing the budget for the following fiscal year based on known factors and educated estimations.

Fall
In the fall, we present information to the VRE Operations Board and begin the discussion on expected costs, revenues, priorities, and options for achieving a balanced budget while delivering a quality service.

Winter
The VRE Operations Board is asked to adopt the recommended budget and refer it to the Commissions. The Commissions - Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC) & Northern Virginia Transportation Commission (NVTC) - then review the budget and refer to the jurisdictions for their review and adoption.

What this Means to You as a Rider
We carefully and thoughtfully construct our budget, and we look for ways to further reduce costs throughout the process. While we do all we can internally to control costs, there are factors beyond our control that will increase our costs year after year. These factors include the implementation of a federally mandated Positive Train Control system, and contractual increases in track access and train operations. Our fiscal year starts July 1, which correlates to any necessary fare increases.

LEGACY CARS: CAREER HISTORY

At the time we began service in 1992, the height limits of the 1st Street Tunnel approaching Union Station only provided clearance for single-level train cars. As a result, our early fleet consisted of single-level passenger cars with a seating capacity around 110 each. The 1st Street Tunnel floors were lowered later in the decade, increasing clearance heights and allowing for higher capacity, bi-level cars. Enter what we now refer to as our the Legacy Cars.

Pullman Standard manufactured the cars in years ranging from 1956 to 1970, but it wasn’t until 2000 to 2003 that we purchased 50 of these cars, which were then veterans of Chicago Metra. Each car received a different level of work depending on its condition prior to VRE service – i.e. seats, flooring, HVAC, door controls, truck overhauls, paint, glass, wiring, cabling, etc. All cars received a new exterior paint job to include VRE markings, and the series started being introduced into service in the summer of 2001. Sporting an upper floor, these first bi-level VRE cars increased seating capacity by nearly 50 seats per car.

The original plan was to use the cars for 7 years, and we started retiring them when 11 Sumitomo/Nippon Sharyo Gallery Style cars were placed into VRE service in 2006. We continued to perform upgrades and maintenance to extend the life of the remaining cars until they could be replaced.
Like you, many members of VRE staff ride our trains every day. Like you, those staff members also wish the trains offered Wi-Fi. In fact, our IT Director rides daily, so you can imagine that if configuring a wireless network was truly a simple feat, we would all be enjoying a blazing-fast internet connection as we speak.

We are preparing to announce a Request For Information (RFI) to the market to learn about new technologies that may be available, but we do know as it stands now, we face a series of challenges to Wi-Fi implementation:

**Challenge 1: Lack of Data Sources or “Backbone Mediums”**
Some mass transportation systems including buses, ferries, airlines, light rail, and heavy rail currently provide Wi-Fi service to their passengers. The network backbone – or what connects to the data source – for these services generally include roadside, cellular, satellite and terrestrial data services. For VRE to provide Wi-Fi service on trains, single or multiple backbone connection points to support the Wi-Fi service are necessary. The most difficult challenge of providing Wi-Fi on VRE trains continues to be a lack of backbone mediums (i.e. weak cell reception) in the rural and sparse terrain that the trains travel each day.

**Challenge 2: Cellular Line of Sight**

Airlines, ferries, buses and some rail transportation providers have the benefit of using line of sight technologies as they operate within (or above) urban settings more conducive to a quality line of sight. The urban setting generally provides heavier saturation of cellular towers using line of sight technologies. Large portions of the territory where VRE operates are sparsely populated with relatively few cellular towers. Operating characteristics such as other trains, overpasses, and a dense surrounding of trees greatly affect attenuation of the line of sight signal, thus degrading service.

Amtrak’s Wi-Fi offers good nationwide coverage overall, however, they experience issues with data signals for a sizable portion of our service area. Our service area represents a very small section of what is typically a longer Amtrak trip … but for us, spotty Wi-Fi signals pulling from current inconsistent cell signals would represent an unacceptable percentage of the commute for many riders.

**Challenge 3: We Do Not Own the Tracks**
We operate on tracks owned by CSX Norfolk Southern and Amtrak. As we do not own the heavy railroad right-of-way within our operating territory services such as Acela’s new Trackside Network (TSN) are not currently a viable option because the technology uses small towers and antennas at the side of the track. CSX and Norfolk Southern – who own the majority of track we operate on – run freight trains, and the demand for Wi-Fi on their trains simply does not exist.

**Challenge 4: Bandwidth**
The amount of bandwidth required to support VRE trains is significantly greater than Amtrak, as the average VRE train carries approximately five times more passengers than the average Amtrak train. The rate of bandwidth available to each rider is not only limited by the number of passengers on the train, but also by the amount of backbone bandwidth that is shared between passengers.

**Way Forward**
VRE provides high quality services to its passengers, measured at 89% overall customer satisfaction in the 2016 Customer Service Survey. VRE’s leadership has maintained that Wi-Fi service will not be offered on the trains until a consistently high quality service can be provided to all passengers on both lines.

We at VRE plan to use the RFI process to engage the industry to determine if a comprehensive solution can be designed, tested and implemented for VRE. The RFI process will allow us to solicit from industry best practices and technologies that may exist to provide Wi-Fi on the trains. While this process does not promise VRE trains will provide Wi-Fi service in the near future, it does provide a means to determine current technology and feasibility. Once the RFI is complete, we can consider the expense or revenue models of providing the service.

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**JAY WESTBROOK RETIRES FROM CSXT**

CSXT Asst. VP Passenger Operations, Jay Westbrook, retired from his position in March. At the April VRE Operations Board meeting, VRE passed a resolution to recognize his contributions to enhance VRE Operations on the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad - the CSX track we utilize.

Mr. Westbrook joined the CSX team in June of 1984. For over 14 years, he mediated communication between VRE and CSX Transportation. He played a vital role in capacity enhancements and in implementing communications procedures, allowing VRE to operate more trains and improving the system’s overall on-time performance. He advocated the addition of the Spotsylvania station, construction of a third track, and enhancements to the AF interlock.
The Manassas station, the second stop on the Manassas line after Broad Run, sits between West and Battle Street and is one of the oldest stations in VRE’s service territory. The train depot is recognized as the signature icon of Downtown Manassas. Inside, you’ll find a waiting room for Amtrak and VRE passengers, the James and Marion Payne Railroad Heritage Gallery, and the Historic Manassas Visitor Center.

The first inhabitants of the Manassas area were Algonquian-speaking Native Americans located near the mouth of the Occoquan River, and Siouan-speaking Mannahoaks located west of the Fall Line. The region was not a priority for colonization until the 1700s, as most initial colonial settlements were established near navigable rivers. It wasn’t until 1722 that the Treaty of Albany restricted the Iroquois to west of the Blue Ridge, and “King” Carter issued grants to acquire thousands of acres in the area that later developed into Manassas. It became an agricultural region with scattered farms until the 1850s, and wasn’t chartered as a town until after the Civil War in 1873.

The first railway in Prince William County, the Orange and Alexandria line, began in 1850 and ran from Alexandria through the Manassas area to Orange County. The construction of a second railway, the Manassas Gap, started from a junction with the Orange and Alexandria line, and ran to Mount Jackson in Shenandoah County. The Manassas station train depot marks the intersection of these two railroads, known as the Manassas Junction.

During the American Civil War, the Manassas Junction was strategically important to both the Union and Confederacy as a supply depot and for military transportation. To the Confederate soldiers, the plan was simple: cut the Federal supply line. The Union, however, was prepared to defend the junction at all costs. Conflicts that ensued destroyed much of the railroad.

After the war, the Manassas Junction became a more integral part of transportation. The first Manassas railroad depot on the present site was a long frame building constructed in the late 1880s. This frame depot was dismantled in 1904 and replaced by a brick passenger depot. On June 25, 1912 a fire broke out in the baggage room and the depot burned, leaving only the foundation and walls. The third and present structure was completed in 1914, incorporating the walls of the original burned out depot.

Several railroads have owned and operated this historical track over the years but it is currently owned by Norfolk Southern. The present depot was donated to the City by Norfolk Southern Corporation in 1995, and has been transformed into a multi-use facility. Today, it is home to the offices of Historic Manassas, Inc., the Historic Manassas Visitor Center and the James and Marion Payne Railroad Heritage Gallery. The Manassas station is a hallmark of the city’s rich history, and a familiar stop for daily commuters on the VRE.

Photo: Manassas Depot, ca. 1930
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VRE carries 20,000 passengers every workday and 70 percent of passengers have an annual household income of more than $100,000.

Reach our passengers with advertising opportunities on our platforms, in our trains and through our award-winning RIDE Magazine.

For more information go to www.vre.org/advertising or contact advertising@vre.org or (703) 838-5425.
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IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.

REPORT SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR LIKE CONCEALING ITEMS UNDER CLOTHING OR SURVEILLANCE OF TRANSIT EQUIPMENT TO POLICE OR TRANSIT PERSONNEL.