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FUTURE ON-SITE VRE STATION
We held our second “Industry Day” early last month for the construction community. Now an annual event, these information sessions outline procurement requirements and other details for the full spectrum of expansion and maintenance projects in VRE’s six-year plan.

The event is a great example of VRE at work, with the ultimate goal of ensuring we receive design and construction bids on our projects from highly experienced firms who can deliver the level of quality our system requires. This year’s turnout was much higher than expected and included representatives from around the country. In fact, next year we anticipate the need for a larger venue.

You too are invited to learn about our expansion and maintenance projects by way of RIDE magazine, vre.org, and by speaking to us directly at our platform events. Our Meet the Management platform series begins in May, but look for us sooner at your origin and destination stations with smaller pop up events.

Sincerely,

DOUG ALLEN
Chief Executive Officer
Virginia Railway Express
What stands 23 feet tall, weighs 17 tons, is made entirely of granite stones and is virtually inaccessible? Those who board the VRE from Spotsylvania may recognize this mysterious monument, known as the Meade Pyramid, as a hallmark of the fleeting scenery witnessed from the moving train’s window pane. The pyramid is a Civil War memorial that was built in 1898 by the Richmond, Fredericksburg and Potomac Railroad (RF&P), with help from the Confederate Memorial Literary Society.

On December 13, 1862 Major General George G. Meade’s Union division, which consisted of between 3,800 and 4,500 soldiers, sought to penetrate the gap in Lieutenant General Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson’s lines. However, sheltered by woods beyond the railroad and open field, the Confederate soldiers anticipated the attack of Meade’s lone division. General Meade wrote, “Owing to the wood, nothing could be seen of them, while all our movements on the cleared ground were exposed to their view.”

Meade’s corps made a breakthrough at the southern end of the battlefield but were aggressively hurled back, sustaining 40% casualties, in part due to lack of reinforcements and a strong Confederate counterattack. He would later write of his loss this day, “While I deeply regret the inability of the division, after having successfully penetrated the enemy’s lines, to remain and hold what had been secured, at the same time I deem their withdrawal a matter of necessity. With one brigade commander killed, another wounded, nearly half their number hors de combat; with regiments separated from brigades, and companies from regiments, and all the confusion and disorder incidental to the advance of an extended line through wood and other obstructions; assailed by a heavy fire, not only of infantry but of artillery—not only in front but on both flanks–the best troops would be justified in withdrawing without loss of honor.”

Thirty-five years later, the Confederate Memorial Literary Society contacted Virginia railroad executives asking them to construct markers at historically significant sites along their lines. While the society simply wanted a sign erected, the president of the RF&P embraced the proposal. On March 31, 1898, RF&P workers assembled the pyramid using unhewn Virginia granite to memorialize the battle in a location visible to train travelers.

The practically inaccessible location and mysterious nature of the Meade Pyramid serves as a reminder of the many stories which compose Virginia’s rich history. As residents of the state, it can be easy to overlook the significance embedded in something as inconsequential as the view from your commute. The next time you find yourself glancing outside of the window, remember that every inch of that view has a story to be told.

On March 31, 1898, RF&P workers assembled the pyramid using unhewn Virginia granite to memorialize the battle in a location visible to train travelers.
**Artistic Expression** (Free)
Through April 1, Tuesday - Sunday from 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Manassas Museum, 9101 Prince William Street
This annual show will feature the art of students from Osbourn High School. Various mediums and types of art will be featured in this exhibit.

**Crow’s Nest: An Ecological Gem in Stafford County**
March 8 at 6:00 PM
Gari Melchers Home and Studio 224 Washington Street, Falmouth, VA 22405
An illustrated presentation by Mike Lott, Regional Supervisor/Northern Region Steward. Free admission. Pavilion at Gari Melchers Home and Studio. Contact: Michelle Crow-Dolby at mdolby@umw.edu or 540-654-1851.

**Annual Dog Easter Egg Hunt**
March 24 at 1:00 PM
Memorial Park, 1401 Kenmore Avenue, Fredericksburg, VA 22401
Come dressed to enter the doggie costume contest to compete for prizes! This is a great way to get out and play with your favorite furry friend. Dogs must be at least 12 weeks old. A small dog area will also be available for dogs under 15lbs. All dog parents must sign a release acknowledging their dog(s) are current on shots and are healthy. On-site registration will be available only if space remains. For information, call 540-372-1086 or visit www.FredParksRec.com

**Coastal Shore Guided Hike** ($7.50)
March 31 at 11:00 AM through April 1 at 1:15 PM
Leesylvania State Park, 2001 Daniel K. Ludwig Drive, Woodbridge, VA 22172
A 3.5 mile Coastal Shore Guided Hike to learn about the park’s history. Have pre-bagged lunches around a bonfire at the Breakwater Store. For only $7.50, you will be provided with your choice of sandwich, bag of chips, cookie, and a bottled drink. Please call the Visitor Center to register 24 hours in advance of the event at 703-583-6904.
Learn more: dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/leesylvania

**Harvey** ($19-$22, plus service fees)
April 21 – May 12 (Wednesday-Saturday 8:00PM, Sunday 3:00PM)
600 Wolfe Street, Alexandria, VA 22314
Imaginary friends can be whoever – or whatever – you want them to be, even a six and half foot tall rabbit. When Elwood starts introducing his imaginary rabbit friend, Harvey, to guests at a party, his sister can no longer tolerate his inebriated antics and worries about her family being exposed to this imaginary rabbit. However, after years of living with Elwood (and Harvey), she begins to start seeing him herself. Tickets: www.thelittletheatre.com / 703-683-0496

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Visit fredericksburgva.com/considerfxbg to learn how.
WHAT IS THE DC2RVA PROJECT?

The Federal Rail Administration (FRA) and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) are working to improve intercity passenger rail service in the north-south corridor between Washington, D.C. and Richmond, VA. These passenger rail service and rail infrastructure improvements are collectively known as the Washington, D.C. to Richmond Southeast High Speed Rail (DC2RVA) Project.

The purpose of the DC2RVA Project is to increase capacity to deliver higher speed passenger rail, expand commuter rail, and accommodate growth of freight rail service in an efficient and reliable multimodal rail corridor. The DC2RVA Project will enable passenger rail to be a competitive transportation choice for intercity travelers between Washington, D.C. and Richmond, and beyond. It extends 123 miles along an existing rail corridor owned by CSX Transportation (CSXT) from the Long Bridge across the Potomac River in Arlington, VA, to Centralia, VA in Chesterfield County, south of Richmond.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS OF THE DC2RVA PROJECT INCLUDE:

- Construct additional main line tracks and track crossovers
- Straighten curves in existing tracks to allow for higher speeds
- Improve intercity passenger rail stations and station areas
- Improve sidings and signals
- Implement roadway crossing safety improvements

THE DC2RVA PROJECT WOULD:

- Improve service frequency, travel time, and on-time performance of intercity passenger trains by adding capacity
- Accommodate freight and commuter rail service
- Include rail infrastructure and safety improvements
- Include passenger service upgrades
- Address rail congestion in the Richmond area

To learn more, visit: dc2rvarail.com

EPA TIER II ENGINE COMPLIANCE

For locomotives to maintain EPA Tier II emissions standards, VRE will replace electronic fuel injector assemblies by the end of this year on its twenty MP36PH-3C locomotives. Replacing the electronic fuel injector assemblies is also part of VRE’s lifecycle maintenance strategy to ensure locomotives operate at a high level of reliability throughout their lifecycle.
**VRE's Crystal City Station May Be Moving**

Crystal City is one of the busiest VRE stations served by both the Fredericksburg and Manassas Lines. The station however faces a number of operational challenges including but not limited to passenger bottlenecks on the platforms and train bottlenecks on the tracks. To begin determining how to best overcome the site’s challenges and to support future system growth, VRE recently completed an evaluation of three potential Crystal City station relocation sites. After careful consideration of the findings, the Arlington County Board, VRE staff and the VRE Operations Board recognized the starred location in the above image as the most favorable station site, and as such, the site will move forward in the process for further analysis and design.

**Site Challenge 1.** The existing Crystal City platform, at 400 feet, is too short to effectively serve longer trains as it only allows all train car doors to open on a four-car or less train set. The inability for riders to access all train doors creates bottlenecks when getting on/off the train, as currently VRE runs several eight-car train sets. Further, as ridership increases in parallel to population growth, VRE plans to run longer trains. Eventually, an 850-foot platform will be needed for riders to access all doors on future 10-car trains. At the current station location, there is limited space to expand the platform due to the curvature of the tracks and the narrow railroad access.

**Site Challenge 2.** The Crystal City station platform has access to only one of three existing rail tracks, requiring VRE trains to always use that track. As these tracks are heavily trafficked by other passenger and freight trains and there are only a few locations where trains can switch tracks, all trains on this track must accommodate for the stop at this station. The conceptual design at the starred location incorporates an island platform allowing trains to access the station on two tracks. These conceptual plans also accommodate a future fourth track currently under design by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation’s D.C. to Richmond, Va. (DC2RVA) project (page 4).

**Site Challenge 3.** The current City City station site is not well connected to other forms of public transportation. The relocation of the Crystal City station will make it easier for riders to access a new Metrorail station entrance on Crystal Drive and the Crystal City-Potomac Yard Transitway. It will also be a shorter walk to many office locations.

**What's Next?** The timeframe and funding for the final design and construction of this project are yet to be determined. To date, funding has been provided by The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) and the Commonwealth of Virginia. VRE expects to announce a public meeting in late spring/early summer.
Q: WHY CAN'T OPERATIONAL TESTING BE DONE SOME OTHER TIME?

A: In order to ensure your safety as passengers on VRE commuter trains in our heavily used rail corridors, the operating officials of Amtrak, CSX, VRE, Keolis and Norfolk Southern periodically conduct "operational tests" on the crews that operate our trains. These teams, on a monthly basis, create unannounced "tests" and "observations" of employee compliance with the Railroad Codes of Operating Rules.
WHAT’S BREWING AT THE QUANTICO TRAIN STATION?!

The Town of Quantico has a historic influence dating back to 1654 when it was originally called Potomac. In 1872, the same year the name changed to Quantico, their original train station was built.

This small town, surrounded by the Marine Corps Base, is unquestionably unique. In addition to its historic splendor, this town boasts Ricks Roasters Coffee shop housed in the town’s train station served by Amtrak and VRE trains.

The story of Ricks Roasters Coffee began when its owners, Sean and Keely Ricks, had a dream of opening their own business while he was on active duty at the Pentagon and she was a school social worker. They started roasting coffee in their house ... now their dream has grown to its own production facility in south Stafford supplying coffee to over 150 establishments in the mid-Atlantic region, including the Quantico train station.

“Sean and Keely are great people,” said Chris Henry VRE Director of Rail Operations. “They have been through a lot, so it is exciting for us to see their growth and success. We also know our riders are happy to have great coffee available every morning,” he added.

Since 2013, Ricks Roasters Coffee Shop has been serving its freshly roasted coffee to commuters at the Quantico station. Monday through Friday, the shop opens at 5 AM to make sure those passengers either arriving or departing on the first VRE train have a freshly brewed cup of coffee to start the day. The shop is open until 10 AM then reopens at 3 PM until 8 PM to serve the evening commuting rush.

Rick Roasters Coffee’s dedication to serving riders doesn’t end at hot beverages, and the shop believes in supporting the local economy. Tuesday through Thursday, a VRE conductor delivers a batch of freshly baked doughnuts from Fredericksburg’s delicious Paul’s Bakery for morning passengers to enjoy. Also, in addition to being the shop’s manager, Robin Long is an owner in North Stafford Farmers Market and supplies snacks and meal options from local farmers market vendors.

Ricks Roasters offers a variety of coffee flavors. From the most popular blend of Four Horsemen to Bourbon Barrel to the latte of the month – there is a beverage for every taste. Their focus is providing a delicious product that everyone can enjoy.

In addition to the variety of food options, riders can also pick up and purchase VRE tickets at the shop.

Even if your destination is not Quantico, stop by Ricks Roasters Coffee shop. You’ll get a taste of history, doughnuts, local fare, and of course, freshly brewed coffee!

From left to right: Keely, Danielle and Robin

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RAIL TIME PUZZLES

ACROSS
1 State-run numbers game
2 Shelter adoptees
3 Toms and bucks
4 Crowd around
5 Suffic for sect
6 Reunion attendee
7 Antsy feeling
8 Make a mockery of
9 Part-time degree program
10 Open to bribery
11 Those in favor
12 Part of some freight trains
13 Full of enthusiasm
14 Take a spill
15 Act as lookout for, say
16 Canvas quarters
17 Most lean and muscular
18 2017 World Series winner
19 Solemn procedures
20 Less significant
21 Viewer’s recording medium
22 Goals’ stats
23 Wool source
24 Ration out
25 Slippery swimmers
26 Recalls
27 Bad half of fiction
28 Hair gel, for instance
29 Woodwind holder
30 Extends across
31 Deserve to get
32 Salty septet
33 Divert, as a train
34 One visiting websites
35 North Atlantic catch
36 Devotee of Ryan studio
37 Twosome
38 Cut down to size

69 Sights near the Colosseum
70 Bart’s brainy sister
71 Not to be trusted
72 Most born in August
73 Poker pair
74 Sign of things to come
75 Heroic tales
76 Long-eared hoppers
77 It means “bad”
78 Leica competitor
79 Transferred nest egg
80 Stranded at a chalet, maybe
81 Fexofenadine
82 Tribune
83 German autos
84 Under siege
85 Andy Griffith Show spinoff
86 Foxx of Ray
87 Influential person
88 Certain proof of purchase
89 Exodus author
90 Sources of shade
91 Shakespearean title females
92 Rider's admission
93 Comparatively cautious
94 Last president with a mustache
95 Teens’ safety org.
96 Venerable
97 Casual eater
98 Minnesota iron range
99 Blow off steam
100 Smartphone screen array
101 Generic address
102 Inductive feeling, for short
103 Pinocchio goldfish
104 Paid (up)
105 Env. insert
106 Brother of Zeus
107 Burn superficially
108 King Ferdinand’s homeland
109 Bob’s
110 Office agreement
111 French farewell
112 Washington’s subway
113 Play down
114 Lower leg
115 Shoulder pad
116 Recessed lighting
117 Those in favor

DOWN
1 Successful legislation
2 Two-toned treat
3 Tidied up
4 Lament
5 Typical solitary diamond size
6 Priest on a base
7 Source of shade
8 Soothes phonies
9 Streaming appliances
10 Authority
11 Deal facilitator
12 Pocket fluff
13 Announcement at LAX
14 Stuff served with soup
15 454 (airline)
16 Andy Griffith Show spinoff
17 440 (airline)
18 Airplane seat
19 Railroad
20 Crimson
21 Rolex
22 Rolling seat
23 Domino
24 Headline

64 Disney film set in China
65 Sports replay technique
66 Reunion attendee
67 Video arcade pioneer
68 Hindu ascetic
69 Winter Olympics gear
70 Billiards bounces
71 Sandwich staple
72 Digital fullsense
73 Hindu ascetic
74 _Land (2016)
75 Island near Lady Liberty
76 Uncool one
77 Pennsylvania port
78 Nine-digit ID issuer
79 Dinner menu selection
80 Down, e.g.
81 Was in charge
82 Science guy
83 deGrasse Tyson
84 Falling-out
85 YouTube post
86 Snoop group
87 Moush’s sofa
88 Have a cameo role?
89 “Got it”
90 Formal informative
91 Product pitches
92 A second time
93 Hint of color
94 Argonautic comeback
95 Hold together
96 Nothing but
97 Green Gables girl
98 Objections
99 “Get it!”
100 Snoo group
101 Informal affirmative

SUDOKU

1 2 3 4 5 6
2 1 5
7 3 9 5 4
4 3 2 1 3
8 6 2 1 3
9 7

RIDE Magazine | MARCH 2018 9
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