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At VRE, we strive every day to offer customers the most comfortable and reliable trip possible. But one thing takes precedence over everything else—your safety.

It might seem like we discuss this issue a lot, but as we say internally on a regular basis, “Safety first, because accidents last.” We can prepare for incidents to the best of our abilities, but it’s also important to know what to do if something were to happen. VRE’s safety and security strategy takes a system-wide approach relying on many different groups: passengers, the surrounding community, first responder agency partners, train crews, our host railroads and the many contractors who support VRE. All of these facets combine to create one strong community dedicated to the safety of VRE as a rail system.

You can see that we put passengers first in that list. Every single day, we count on riders to assist us in our safety efforts. While VRE is a moderately sized commuter system, it carries 9,000 to 10,000 people each day (accounting for up to 20,000 trips on a typical day), or 9,000 to 10,000 pairs of eyes to watch out for anything suspicious or dangerous.

But this doesn’t just mean reporting a suspicious package or alerting authorities to someone too close to the tracks (though this is of the utmost importance). Riders are also important in helping us assist passengers in distress. We had a few incidents this summer that prompted riders to spring into action and to seek help or, just as importantly, patiently allow VRE and Keolis staff to handle. We want to reiterate that it is always ok to mention concerns to train conductors and other staff, even if something just doesn’t feel right.

VRE conductors and engineers operate on the tracks in just about the same manner every day and their ability to memorize the territory is paramount to our safety and success. Our crews are experienced rail veterans who know how the railroad runs and how a safe railroad should look. In addition, they are regularly trained and briefed on various security awareness practices, and are continuously kept informed of possible safety and security concerns based on incidents that may have occurred in or outside the country. And as some of you may have witnessed, VRE crews are trained to respond to various medical emergencies and other situations. Rest assured that they are watching and on hand should you ever require assistance.

If you’d like to learn more about how VRE prepares for incidents or what you as a rider should do in these situations, visit www.vre.org/safety. While no transportation system is perfect, we won’t stop trying to be, especially when it comes to your safety. And as always, thank you for riding.

DOUG ALLEN
Chief Executive Officer
Virginia Railway Express
Each weekday, VRE logs approximately 19,000 trips for passengers who trust their trains to get them where they need to go safely. And while incidents don’t happen often, riders should be aware that all VRE stakeholders—staff, first responders, local communities, VRE host railroad companies, etc.—are prepared for and focused on keeping everyone safe on the system.

According to the Federal Railroad Administration, rail has never been safer. In fact, human factor caused accidents are down 15 percent, track defects dropped 52 percent and equipment defects are down 36 percent over the last decade. But not all train emergencies are big incidents.

From time to time, medical emergencies such as allergic reactions, heat-induced illness, and other situations can occur, causing the distress of a fellow passenger and necessitating assistance. VRE train crews are trained and ready to help in these kinds of emergencies. Aside from medical emergencies, there are occasional issues that require the assistance of law enforcement officers, such as suspicious packages, unruly passengers, or criminal activity.

VRE does not have its own police personnel. However, VRE is fully supported by law enforcement partners from all levels of government throughout the VRE service region, as well as through full cooperation from official railroad police forces employed by Norfolk Southern, CSXT and Amtrak. VRE does have 85 non-uniformed, armed and sworn law enforcement officers in its Undercover LEO program. These officers are regular VRE riders who carry the capacity to make arrests at any locality within the system. They are available to help VRE train crews if needed.

Local law enforcement agencies, which patrol VRE properties located within their respective jurisdictions, conduct security exercises on board VRE trains and at stations throughout the year along with the Visual Intermodal Prevention and Response team (a Transportation Security Administration program).

In yet another effort to prepare for safety and security situations, VRE conducts annual full-scale emergency simulations. This allows participating agencies (local, state and federal law enforcement partners and first responders) to become even more familiar with the environment in which VRE operates, the rail equipment’s emergency access and evacuation features and a variety of other situations that responders may face unique to passenger rail. VRE offers additional training to local first responders and federal agencies, such as the Customs and Border Patrol Canine Teams.

Even with all this preparation by cooperating agencies, train crews and staff, riders serve a very important role in recognizing and informing VRE of potential safety incidents. If you see or suspect anything that could be a potential safety or security issue, contact VRE or law enforcement immediately.
FALL INTO A SAFER RIDE

As summer ends and everyone returns to a regular routine, public transit can get crowded. We may know our routes, but newer riders returning from vacation might not. All the new faces and schedules can get even more difficult to recognize when something or someone feels out of place. That’s why it’s important to keep an eye out for suspicious bags or behaviors.

If you see something, say something.™

It can be difficult to know what something suspicious looks like, but trust yourself when something doesn’t feel quite right. Race, gender or religious affiliations are not indicators of suspicious behavior. Listed below, however, are some behaviors that could be indicators. Don’t be afraid to report any of the following:

OVERSIZED CLOTHING

Oversized clothing is more common during cold or bad weather conditions. But in the warmer months, loose fitting clothes, large sweatshirts, vest or jackets are far less common. So is clothing that is disproportionate to the body type of the person. Although these things are not in and of themselves suspicious behavior, they can indicate concealed or potentially dangerous items.

UNAUTHORIZED SURVEILLANCE

Only authorized personnel should be doing maintenance on surveillance cameras, safety systems, machinery or other sensitive equipment. They should also be the only ones entering unauthorized areas at train and bus stations or loitering around transportation facilities. Keep an eye out for anyone who does not fit this description attempting to access authorized areas or tamper with transit equipment.

UNUSUAL ACTIVITY

Suspicious behavior can include anyone fixated on an object or certain location, videotaping, sketching or taking notes on transit equipment and facilities or security equipment. It’s also worth reporting if anyone attempts to abandon a vehicle in or near a transit parking facility, or if there are cars without proper tags and license plates in the parking lot.

UNUSUAL OBJECTS

We’re all familiar with the concept of what an unattended bag looks like, but there are other items that could also be cause for concern. These can include aerosol spray cans, anything emitting a strange smell or gas, or carry-on items such as large backpacks, gym bags and luggage weighing more than normal. It’s also worth noting if a package or luggage is placed in a different compartment than the one being occupied.

WHAT TO DO

If you do see something suspicious, please report it immediately. Take detailed notes, such as the train number or station name. Don’t be afraid to report something, even if you aren’t sure how serious it is.

DO NOT take direct action
DO NOT confront the individual
DO NOT reveal your suspicions
DO record as many details as possible
DO notify appropriate authorities as soon as possible

WHO TO TELL

Notify a police officer or transit personnel. If you can’t easily locate someone in uniform, call the police at either: 1-877-4VA-TIPS or 911.

If you’re on a bus, tell the driver. If you’re on a train or at a train station, tell a conductor or transit worker.

Save your local police phone number into your contacts for quick future reference. For more information about how to help make a routine out of riding safely, visit SecureTransit.org.

This ad was purchased with funds provided by the US Department of Homeland Security.
As Manassas Line riders boarded their morning trains on Wednesday, June 15, they were met by VRE team members who encouraged them to complete a survey and share their thoughts on the Gainesville–Haymarket Extension (GHX) project. The GHX project is a proposed 11-mile extension of the Manassas Line via the Norfolk Southern Railway B-Line branch, extending from the City of Manassas through Gainesville to the Town of Haymarket near the intersection of U.S. Route 15 and I-66. Potential new VRE stations could be located at Innovation, Gainesville and Haymarket. Approximately 60 percent of the 4,500 riders that morning took the survey, and this input will serve as valuable guidance to VRE in the study process.

The short survey included questions about the riders’ boarding station, their destination station, their home zip code and which boarding station they would use if the extension were built. An option for adding questions and/or suggestions was also provided.

The majority of the current Broad Run riders indicated they would switch to one of the new stations if the extension is built. Given the option to board the train at different stations, including the proposed new locations, 22 percent of current Broad Run riders chose Innovation, 25 percent chose Haymarket and 26 percent chose the Gainesville GHX station. Manassas and Manassas Park stations had the least interest from current Broad Run riders (as 9 percent of those riders said they would ride from Manassas and 1 percent from Manassas Park).

One option under consideration as part of the GHX study is to potentially close or relocate the Broad Run station. Some survey respondents included statements such as “Keep Broad Run open” and “I like Broad Run,” representing the 17 percent of current Broad Run riders who indicated they would not ride VRE at all if Broad Run closes.

Survey concerns and questions focused on the GHX project timeline, potential overcrowding on trains if the extension is built, pricing and parking availability. Many riders also noted that they think VRE needs more frequent service, particularly in the evening and midday. These questions and comments are very useful for the GHX study team and VRE senior management, as both teams are taking these comments into consideration.

Riders in favor of the extension expressed their enthusiasm with comments such as “The extension is a great idea” and “The extension would be extremely convenient for many riders, please complete ASAP.” Many supporters would like to see the extension built sooner than the current 10-year time frame. One survey response stated the extension “sounds like a great plan for commuters, especially if I-66 will have tolls.”

Overall, the survey results show support for the extension of VRE service to the Gainesville–Haymarket area. This important information will help the study team develop recommendations for the best service options, or alternatives, to advance for further analysis. While VRE continues to look at these options, it should be reiterated no decision has yet been made.

Next steps include the public presentation of more detailed information about a smaller set of alternatives in fall 2016. To learn more about the GHX project, including the project timeline, FAQs, goals and objectives, visit www.vre.org/ghx and stay connected by liking VRE GHX on Facebook and following the project on Twitter at @VRE_GHX.
Port City Brewing Co. Oktoberfest Parking Lot Party  
Friday, Sept. 9 (2 – 10 p.m.), Saturday, Sept. 10 (noon – 9 p.m.)
Port City Brewing Company  
3950 Wheeler Ave.  
Alexandria, VA  22304
Port City Brewing Company couldn't wait for Oktoberfest this year, so it is throwing their Parking Lot Party a bit early to break out their Oktoberfest brew. Join for live music and plenty of food trucks on both Friday and Saturday, so bring your dancing shoes and your appetite.
www.portcitybrewing.com

Paws4Vets 3rd Annual Got Your Back Dog Walk  
Saturday, Sept. 10 (9 a.m. – 1 p.m.)
2410 Caroline St.  
Fredericksburg, VA  22401
Enjoy a walk with your dogs while also raising money to provide service dogs to active-duty military, veterans and their dependents! Participants will walk on the Heritage Trail/Canal Path beginning and ending at Old Mill Park. Participants can enjoy a silent auction, raffles, music, food, activities for kids, service dog teams and classic car and motorcycle displays from Cruisin for Heroes and Rolling Thunder.
www.visitfred.com

Workhouse Fine Arts Festival 2016  
Saturday, Sept. 10 (10 a.m. – 6 p.m.), Sunday, Sept. 11 (10 a.m. – 5 p.m.)
Workhouse Arts Center  
9601 Ox Rd.  
Lorton, VA  22079
Join the Workhouse Arts Center in celebrating 150+ of the nation’s finest artists at the Workhouse Fine Arts Festival 2016 on September 10 & 11. The festival showcases only the best fine art (no commercial or mass produced objects), including painting, ceramics, glass, fiber/clothing, mixed media, wood, precious metal/jewelry, printmaking, photography, furniture and sculpture.
www.workhousearts.org

14th Annual King Street Art Festival  
Saturday, Sept. 17 (10 a.m. – 7 p.m.), Sunday, Sept. 18 (10 a.m. – 5 p.m.)
King Street (from Washington to Union Streets)  
Alexandria, VA  22314
At this popular art festival, King Street from Washington Street all the way to the Potomac waterfront is transformed into a gallery filled with art from more than 250 artists from the U.S. and abroad. Visitors can purchase original artwork, participate in hands-on art activities at the Torpedo Factory Art Center, and enjoy a scoop of ice cream at The Art League’s Annual Ice Cream Bowl Fundraiser.
www.visitalexandriava.com

4th Annual Brentsville Bluegrass Festival  
Saturday & Sunday, Sept. 17 & 18 (1 – 4 p.m.)
Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre  
12229 Bristow Rd.  
Bristow, VA  20136
Enjoy the lively sounds of local bluegrass bands at Brentsville Courthouse Historic Centre! Along with music, local food vendors, antique vehicles, and games will be offered throughout the day for a perfect fall day. Cost is $10 per person and free for children under six.
www.visitpwc.com

2016 Social Action Awareness Forum  
Saturday, Sept. 24 (10 a.m. – noon)
First Baptist Church of Manassas  
9258 Center St.  
Manassas, VA 20110
Are you interested in understanding community/police relations? Do you want to learn how to advocate for your healthcare? Are you interested in how human trafficking and domestic violence affect our country? Would you like to learn how to have your voting rights restored? Join the Prince William County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority to discuss these topics and more at a free workshop meant to empower and educate.
www.pwcadst.org

Commuters are eligible to vote by absentee ballot in advance of Election Day. Commuters can use Reason Codes 1C, 1D, or 1E.
www.vote.virginia.gov

You can vote by absentee ballot either by mail or by visiting an Absentee Vote Center.

Mail: visit www.vote.virginia.gov and request to have an absentee ballot mailed to you. Requests for mail absentee ballots must be made before 5pm Tuesday November 1.

Absentee Vote Center: Absentee Vote Centers open September 23. Visit www.pwcvotes.com for Absentee Vote Center hours and locations. The last day to vote at an Absentee Vote Center is Saturday November 5 by 5pm.

Prince William County Office of Elections  
Phone: 703-792-6470  
Email: pwcvote@pwcgov.org  
Website: www.pwcvotes.com
SPOTLIGHT ON VRE

MEET BRENDA THOMPSON
COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

She’s smart, sweet and a proud southern woman. If you’ve had the chance to chat with her when calling in to VRE headquarters with any questions or issues, you already knew all of that.

A VRE veteran of 14 years, Brenda Thompson loves what she does. In her current role as communications specialist, Brenda spends her day interacting with customers. She is one of the first faces visitors see when they enter the office, always greeting people with a smile and ready to help. Brenda manages the lost & found program here at VRE, answers questions via phone and email and conducts ticket exchanges and replacements, among a dozen other tasks that keep riders happy.

In addition to these job responsibilities, Brenda manages and participates in many of VRE’s special events, such as the Firecracker trains that bring people into D.C. for the July 4th celebration on the National Mall and the Santa Trains and Toys for Tots program each holiday season. Her eagerness to help and be around people is something she credits to her upbringing in North Carolina and her genuine appreciation for life.

“My southern roots define who I am, especially in my love for people, family, ethics, manners, hard work and most of all, being true to myself,” Brenda said. “I’m my own motivator because I’m grateful for every opportunity given to me every day.”

Brenda first came to the Northern Virginia/D.C. area right after high school, as she was recruited by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as a data entry employee, handling confidential information and winning several awards for her fast typing skills. It was then she met her husband, to whom she’s been married for almost 40 years. After her time with the FBI, Brenda worked for the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation for 15 years, where she served as an administrative assistant to several different departments.

In addition to her robust professional career, Brenda has also valued her other experiences. She loves being a mother of five and a grandmother of 11. Brenda attended Trinity College and continued to expand her knowledge by taking advantage of “every seminar, every training and every opportunity I could find to expand my skill level.”

“I try to make the best out of each day because tomorrow is not promised,” Brenda said. “So I will keep on smiling, keep on talking and helping our passengers because VRE is a great place to work and our passengers are good people.”

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Visit trytransitweek.org to explore travel options! Take the pledge while you’re there to be entered to win one year of free transit and a pair of round-trip Amtrak tickets or other prizes.*

Try Transit Week

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation

*See trytransitweek.org for contest rules and regulations
VRE passengers have come to expect reliable, comfortable, and exceptional service, as they should. And while we take pride in offering a quality product to riders, there are times when passengers see things before VRE does. We encourage riders to let us know when there is a safety, communication, or aesthetic issue at a station. Most stations are not actually owned by VRE, but rather by the jurisdiction in which they are located, therefore there are many points of contact. So VRE acts as a clearinghouse for these comments. We promise to let the appropriate entity know of any issues that arise, but do need the public to let us know of anything they see that needs attention in order to get them rectified as quickly as possible.

There are several ways riders can let VRE know about things they encounter at stations, on platforms or in VRE parking lots. One outlet for voicing concerns is the online form available on our website. At www.vre.org/about/contact/station-concerns-form, riders can quickly and easily let VRE staff know of concerns like lighting issues, snow or dirt needing removal, P.A. or other announcement issues, litter or debris, ticket vending machine problems, parking lot concerns, etc. Once VRE receives this information, staff will email the form submitter within five business days.

Many riders opt to inform us of issues via gotrains@vre.org, another acceptable option. And while passengers can certainly also let VRE know of these issues through Twitter and/or Facebook, they should expect staff to reach out privately for additional information.

Thank you in advance for helping us keep our stations fully functional and beautiful!

Get Noticed With VRE Advertising

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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Ticket vending machines can malfunction. To get it back up and working, let VRE know through one of our communication channels.

▲ Help us keep our stations looking as good as the day they were built.
WHICH BAG LOOKS SUSPICIOUS?

DIFFICULT CHOICE, RIGHT?
(THE ANSWER IS ALL OF THE ABOVE)

REPORT ALL UNATTENDED BAGS AND UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR TO POLICE OR TRANSIT PERSONNEL.

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.
securetransit.org

1-877-4VA-TIPS

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