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FROM THE CEO

As you know, VRE’s priorities are to consistently provide safe, reliable, quality service for you. While we remain focused on these goals, we also need to be working to keep our service financially sustainable while planning for future growth.

I wanted to fill you in on what we have been doing to do address our long-term financial objectives.

A year ago we completed a financial analysis that showed us what we needed to do to meet this challenge. The result of the analysis showed that over the next 20 years, to sustain our current levels of service and to expand to meet growing ridership demand, we will need to work closely with our funding partners to find new financial resources to fill projected funding gaps. This will be necessary to offset expected increases in operating costs, and to maintain and expand the tracks, stations, bridges and rail yards we use to ensure that these assets remain in a “state of good repair” and can accommodate future growth. We will also need resources to maintain our new fleet of rail cars to keep them in good shape, and eventually replace them when they have surpassed their useful life.

Last month, at the request of the Virginia General Assembly, the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) conducted an analysis of VRE’s long term financial outlook, which confirmed our long range needs assessment and found some interesting data along the way. Here are some of the findings in the report:

• VRE Average Daily Ridership has tripled from just fewer than 6,000 in 1993 to 19,000 in 2013 (and growing);
• VRE existing ridership provides service levels similar to 36 lane miles of interstate capacity along the congested I-95 and I-66 corridors – with a value of up to $5.4 billion;
• If VRE were able to fully implement its System Plan 2040, we would provide service equivalent to 96 miles of interstate capacity-at a fraction of the cost it would take to build new lanes on I-95 and I-66.

Over the past couple of months, I have been meeting with government officials and our funding partners at the Federal, State and local levels to educate them on our regional impacts and discuss our financial status so we may begin to work together to find long term solutions. I encourage you, the riders, to reach out to your representatives to tell them what VRE means to you!

As you can tell, I am very excited about our future and look forward to learning more from you, our riders on ways we can help improve your rider experience. Feel free to visit our website at www.vre.org or send us an email at gotrains@vre.org.

Sincerely,

DOUG ALLEN
Chief Executive Officer
Virginia Railway Express

ARE YOU A LONG TIME VRE RIDER?

We want to hear from you! In commemoration of our upcoming 25th anniversary, VRE is looking for riders that have been using our service for more than 15 years, and would be willing to tell us about your “passenger experiences.” For example, we would like to know things like how you first came to ride VRE, how the passenger experience has evolved over the years, connections you have made on the train, and any special VRE memories that you would like to share. Long time riders will be featured in upcoming issues of RIDE Magazine.

If you fit the bill, please contact us at gotrains@vre.org, or give us a call at (703) 838-5416.
VRE UPDATE

2016: VRE BY THE NUMBERS

- Average On-Time Performance: 87.7%
- Total Number of Trips 2016: 4,583,076
- Average Daily Ridership 2016: 18,406
- Service Miles – Fredericksburg Line: 60
- Service Miles – Manassas Line: 35
- Number of Stations: 19
- Number of Daily Trains: 32
- Average Daily Ridership 2015: 17,815
- Peak Ridership Day July 12, 2016: 23,309
- Number of Equivalent Highway Lane Miles VRE Service Provides: 36
ARE YOU SAVING TIME WITH VRE MOBILE?

Did you know that you can purchase your ticket, track your trains, view the VRE schedule and access much more information at your fingertips by downloading VRE Mobile?

The VRE mobile app provides greater flexibility and convenience for riders by allowing customers to pay their fares and skip the Ticket Vending Machine (TVM) altogether. The free download, available at the iTunes App store and Google Play, allows VRE riders to map out their trips and purchase whatever ticket option works for them, whether they need a monthly pass or a ticket for a single ride. Utilizing the tool allows VRE customers to purchase tickets at their own convenience and save time by completely bypassing station TVM’s. The app gives users the option to purchase tickets using debit or credit cards, split the cost between two different cards, or use SmartBenefits to purchase a ticket.

VRE Mobile also comes in handy when it’s time to validate a ticket. Validating a ticket, the process of applying the value of one ride from a ticket to the current trip on a train, is mandatory before starting a trip. When in a rush to catch a train, it can be difficult to stop at a machine to validate that ticket. Failure to do so, however, could result in a summons to court and a hefty fine. With VRE Mobile, riders can validate right on their Smartphone, bypassing the TVM altogether. Riders who buy and validate tickets via VRE Mobile then need only show the conductor their phone upon ticket check.

Learn more about VRE Mobile and all you can do with the app at VRE.org/mobile

MAKING A HABIT OUT OF STAYING SAFE

The New Year is in full swing and people are already settling back into their routines. One habit you’ll want to keep this year is staying alert for any suspicious objects or behavior.

Unusual behavior can include people staying at train stations for long periods of time without getting on, an individual who seems fixated only on a particular object or location, or people entering unauthorized areas at train or bus stations.

Suspicious objects may include bags, boxes, or packages left unattended – especially if partially hidden or in unusual locations. These bags or briefcases may simply be forgotten or discarded items. But it’s better to be safe than sorry.

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.™

If you do see something suspicious, please report it immediately. Take detailed notes, such as the train number or station name. Then 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. Save your local police phone number into your contacts for quick future reference.

To help everyone stay safe, all year long, visit SecureTransit.org.

This ad was purchased with funds provided by the US Department of Homeland Security.
VRE VISITS HISTORIC RICHMOND MAIN STREET STATION

On January 23, one of VRE’s trains left its normal confines and traveled down to Richmond for an opportunity to be showcased at the annual Virginia Transit Association’s Legislative Reception. The train was parked on the platform at the newly renovated station during the event, so attendees could tour the train. Among those attending the reception were Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe, Virginia Secretary of Transportation Aubrey Lane, Department of Rail and Public Transportation Director Jennifer Mitchell, and Members of the Commonwealth Senate and General Assembly.

Richmond’s Main Street Station was constructed in 1901 in the “Second Renaissance Revival Style”, and is registered as a U.S. National Historic Landmark. Located adjacent to the James River, its iconic clock tower has been a prominent feature of the Richmond skyline for over a century. After a decline in passenger rail service in the mid-to late 20th Century, and a series of floods and fires, the station fell into disrepair and was in danger of being torn down. However, a major renovation was completed in 2003, and with the return of Amtrak service, the station is once again a thriving transportation hub. The station is expected to be a major stop on the future Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor, and serve not only trains, but also bus and streetcar passengers as an intermodal hub. The recently renovated train shed will provide space for major events in Richmond.
**Alexandria Restaurant Week**
**February 17 – February 26**
**Various Locations**
For 10 days and two weekends, 60 Alexandria restaurants offer a $35 three-course dinner for one OR a $35 dinner for two during Alexandria Winter Restaurant Week, February 17-26, 2017. More than 30 restaurants will also offer lunch deals at $10, $15 or $20 per person in addition to the dinner specials.
www.visitalexandriava.com/event

**Stafford County Black History Month Celebration**
**February 23, 5:00 pm**
**1739 Jefferson Davis Highway Stafford, VA**
Stafford County invites you to celebrate Black History Month by learning about the significant contributions that African Americans made to Stafford’s history as well as America’s history. A free tour of the Rowser Building and the “Path to Freedom” mural will begin at 5:00 p.m. hosted by Frank White, who is a local historian and member of the 350th Commemorative Mural Committee. The tour will be followed by guest speaker, Janet Payne, former Fine Arts Coordinator of Stafford Schools. She will provide a special presentation on Palmer Hayden, Harlem Renaissance painter, who was born in the Widewater area of Stafford County.
www.tourstaffordva.com/events/details/black-history-celebration

**Northern Virginia Polar Plunge Festival**
**February 25, 10 am – 4 pm**
**Tim’s Rivershore Restaurant & Crabhouse**
**1510 Cherry Hill Road, Dumfries, VA**
Put on your brave—just don’t forget your swimsuit—for the Northern VA Polar Plunge® Fest, where hundreds will dash into the icy Potomac. In addition to your icy dip, you can strut your stuff on the beach in your best Plunge costume, listen to the live band, or win some COOL door prizes!
www.polarplunge.com/nova

**African American Pioneers in Aviation Celebration**
**February 25, 10 am – 3 pm**
**Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Udvar-Hazy Center, Chantilly, VA**
The February Family Days at Smithsonian Air and Space Museum celebrates the significant contributions African Americans have made to flight and space exploration. Visitors will enjoy presentations, hands-on activities, and stories, and may have the opportunity to meet astronauts, fighter pilots, and others who will share stories of their challenges and accomplishments. Free admission.
www.airandspace.si.edu/visit/events

**Fredericksburg RV Expo**
**March 3 (1 pm to 8 pm), March 4 (10 am – 7 pm), March 5 (11 am – 4 pm)**
**Fredericksburg Expo Center**
The area’s top RV dealers will all be in one location for the annual Fredericksburg RV show at the Fredericksburg Expo Center. There will be hundreds of recreational vehicles on display from pop-ups to luxury motor coaches representing almost 50 brands in all price ranges. Whether you are an experienced camper wanting to upgrade your unit or are looking to get your first RV, the Fredericksburg RV Show is the place to get the BEST DEAL of the year and find new campgrounds, accessories and new RV products.
www.fredericksburgrvshow.com

**Alexandria St. Patrick’s Day Parade**
**March 4, 2:00 p.m.**
**King St., Alexandria, VA**
The Ballyshaner’s of Alexandria invite you to witness one of the nation’s oldest and largest St. Patrick’s Day parades down King Street through the heart of Old Town. Parade starts at the intersection of King and Alfred Streets.
www.ballyshaners.org/parade/parade_front.htm

**18th Annual Greater Manassas St. Patrick’s Day Parade**
**March 11, 11:00 am**
**Prescott Avenue and Quarry Road, Downtown Manassas, VA**
Join thousands of Northern Virginians for this annual Manassas St. Patrick’s Day tradition.
www.stpatparade.net
Meet Jacob Craig, VRE’s new Project Manager. Jacob brings 20 years of professional engineering experience to VRE from both the private and public sectors of the industry. He worked as a design consultant for 16 of those years and for the Commonwealth of Virginia for four years. Jacob looks forward to designing and constructing various infrastructure projects to help improve existing and future passenger rail service in Northern Virginia.

Jacob has experience with the Planning, Design, and Construction phases of railroad, transit, highway, and site development projects. Some freight rail projects include double-stack clearances, speed improvements, bridge replacements, and industrial access. Some passenger related projects include high-speed rail studies, additional track capacity, station improvements, and new operations, maintenance, and administration facilities. He is an active member of the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association, where he participates on the high-speed rail committee and commuter rail joint committee meetings.

Jacob holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Civil Engineering from the Virginia Military Institute and a Master’s Degree in Civil Engineering from West Virginia University. He is currently enrolled in a Master of Business Administration degree program at Virginia Tech. Jacob also earned the USDOT Rail Transit Safety and Security Program Certificate, while serving in a previous safety related role.

“I started out my career working on highway and site development projects before getting an opportunity to work on projects within the railroad industry. I enjoyed the new rail projects and also the travel required to cover about a 10-state area. So much so, that I began to focus on freight and passenger rail improvements in earnest for the latter part of my career. My family also had a couple of career railroaders a few generations back, so I guess railroading was with me all along.”

“For the first part of my career, I never considered using public transportation for commuting” Jacob recalls. “That is…until I started working in greater metropolitan areas. I remember taking an express bus from the suburbs to downtown and actually enjoying a less stressful commute. I could rest, listen to music, surf the web, or even get some extra work done while traveling. For me, the benefits of public transportation dovetailed nicely with my work schedule. Since then, I have been very supportive of alternate transportation choices. I use VRE trains regularly to commute and any improvements that we can make now and in the near future can only help the service and better position us for future growth.”

Jacob lives with his wife April, and their two children near Richmond, Virginia. When free time presents itself, he enjoys working out at a local fitness center and playing guitar.

VIRGINIA “SMART SCALE” RECOMMENDATIONS COULD PAVE THE WAY FOR FUTURE VRE EXPANSION

VRE was pleased to recently learn a combined task force of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) recommended the Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) provide new grant funding for the acquisition of additional rail cars and a series of infrastructure improvements along the Fredericksburg line. These grants were recommended as part of the Commonwealth’s “Smart Scale” program, which provides funding for transportation infrastructure projects that meet the most critical transportation needs in Virginia.

Both the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission and the George Washington Regional Commission (Fredericksburg area) submitted applications to the Smart Scale program on behalf of VRE. The VDOT/DRPT staff then reviewed and rated each project submitted across the Commonwealth for funding consideration. The VRE projects received very high scores for overall benefits to the regional transportation system, and were among the projects recommended for funding as part of the CTB’s Fiscal Year 2018-2023 Six-Year Improvement Plan. The recommendations are next presented to the CTB, which gives final approval. If successful, VRE would receive approximately $92 million in new capital grants. These funds, combined with local and Federal grants, would enable the acquisition of 11 new passenger coaches, and fund a number of infrastructure improvements along the Fredericksburg line, including: platform extensions and a new pedestrian tunnel at the Alexandria Station; platform additions and/or extensions and pedestrian access improvements at the Franconia-Springfield, Lorton, Rippon, Quantico, Brooke and Leeland stations; and expansion of the Crossroads Storage and Maintenance Facility.
SENATOR KAINE VISITS VRE SPOTSYLVANIA STATION

The Virginia Railway Express was pleased to welcome U.S. Senator Tim Kaine to its Spotsylvania Station at the end of the Fredericksburg line on December 14. Senator Kaine, who has been a long-time supporter of VRE, both as Senator and Governor of Virginia, requested the tour as part of a fact-finding mission to examine the development of new transportation facilities throughout the Commonwealth.

The visit began with a walking tour of the new Spotsylvania Station train platform, and then moved into the waiting area, where the Senator was officially welcomed by VRE Operations Board Chairman (and Spotsylvania County Supervisor) Gary Skinner. VRE CEO Doug Allen then provided a briefing on VRE operations and capital projects, followed by an update on Commonwealth rail priorities by Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation Director Jennifer Mitchell. Also in attendance were Commonwealth Transportation Board member Hap Connors, Northern Virginia Transportation Commission Executive Director Kate Mattice, and Potomac and Rappahannock Transportation Commission Interim Director Eric Marx. The gathering also included several of Senator Kaine’s staff and staff members from the Virginia Department of Transportation, VRE, CSX, and members of the press corps.

After the briefings, the Senator continued to tour the Crossroads Train Maintenance and Storage facility, just south of the Spotsylvania Station. Here, the Senator visited with a number of VRE operations staff to learn about the critical train maintenance and repair activities that take place at the yard, as well as future expansion plans to accommodate more trains along the Fredericksburg line. Senator Kaine then returned to the station, and made brief remarks where he reiterated his continued support for VRE and discussed the service’s importance to the region’s transportation network. VRE is grateful for the Senator’s visit and looks forward to continuing to work together with him and his staff to advance our priorities in Northern Virginia.
VRE ANNUAL “SANTA TRAIN” A SUCCESS!

Once again this December, VRE and thousands of area families were thrilled to ride our special holiday train and receive a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus. The annual tradition was expanded this year to include departures from the new Spotsylvania Station. The famous jolly couple was thrilled to be joined by several area high school choirs, who entertained participants with festive carols during the rides. Santa and his helpers also had the opportunity to promote rail safety and Operation Lifesaver’s “Look, Listen and Live” campaign. In addition, VRE’s generous riders provided countless toys and substantial cash donations for the U.S. Marines Toys for Tots Program. We look forward to seeing you all next December!
RAIL TIME PUZZLES

ACROSS
1 1990s Second Family
6 Disparage
10 Sudden light
15 Sky blue, to
19 San Antonio landmark
20 Racer of fable
21 Only inanimate zodiac sign
22 Kid-vid explorer
23 Italian custardry dessert
25 Diner side dish
27 Satisfaction seekers
28 Flat hat
30 Hit a homer
31 Nonstandard negative
32 Venom, for instance
33 Japanese video-game maker
34 Sounded harsh
37 Spoke in jest
38 Start of a supposed Louis XV line
42 Call attention to
43 Rogue
45 Words of commitment
46 Liquid in some batteries
47 Jazz accompaniment
48 Idyllic spot
49 Narrow opening
50 Bub
51 Church member
53 Raft wood
55 Malcolm X director
58 Senator Hatch
59 Customary ways
60 Where the blissful walk
61 Of bees
62 Two-number stat
63 WWII five-star general
64 What a cuff covers
65 Hot stuff
66 Animal park barriers
67 Very brave
68 Hardwood tree
73 Beginning blossoms
74 Wet lowlands
75 Difficulties
76 Call attention to
77 It’s all about me
78 Labor Day marchers
82 Got along
83 Be worry-free
85 Irksome
86 Olympics officials
87 Hourly pay
88 Foolish talk
89 Bronbé heroine
90 Disharmony
91 _ Rupert Murdoch
93 Financial outlays
94 Gadfly
95 Thing with strings
96 Reverberated
97 Serenade
100 Thing with strings
102 Evolved
103 Exonermous
104 Exodus novelists
105 Congo’s former name
106 Euron angles
107 Online message
108 Religious faction
109 Went away
110 1910s revolutionary
111 Polio vaccine guy
112 Reverbberates
113 Norwegian royal name
114 Broccoli
115 Give off
116 With 11 Down, fine dish-towel fabric
117 Give a speech
118 Held back, as breath
119 Nautical speed measure
120 Grant successor
121 Came to pass
122 Appraises
123 Color of honey
124 Cheek application
125 Verbose
126 Partner in crime
127 Perfumery compound
128 Discards
129 Take short-term
130 Left dreamland
131 Incomplete sentence
132 Be real
133 Approached
134 Poke fun at
135 Compact piano
136 Well-groomed
137 Thing on a string
138 Clapton of rock
139 Ruckus
140 French 101 verb
141 Regretful feeling
142 Printed “Teh,” almost certainly
143 Debater last October
144 101 English 101 verb

DOWN
1 1 Midland port
2 Norwegian royal name
3 Broccoli (green veggie)
4 Gave off
5 More like slush
6 Jersey, e.g.
7 Vietnam neighbor
8 Cater’s machine
9 Some sneakers
10 Orange Bowl’s home
11 See 53 Down
12 Minimalists
13 Sign of seatleaness
14 Human parasite
15 Some sneakers
16 Sector
17 Try to convince
18 Frog in the throat
19 Impart
20 Wozniak in Steve Jobs
21 1990s Second Family
22 Higher-up
23 Big name in baseball cards
24 Nosy one
25 Nutrition measures
26 Summing-up
27 Enthusiasts
28 Artist Wyeth
29 Longfellow’s timid suitor
30 Certain game-show winner
31 Wordsworth, for one
32 Rarest traces
33 Less common
34 1910s revolutionary
35 In force
36 Polio vaccine guy
37 Reverbberates
38 Norwegian royal name
39 Give off
40 With 11 Down, fine dish-towel fabric
41 Give a speech
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1 2 3 | 4 5 6 | 7 8 9
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4 7 9 | 6 8 2 | 3 1 5

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PERIMETER

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“Or you could just walk around the edge and let your fitness tracker tell you the distance.”
KEEP YOUR GOOD EYE OPEN.

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING™

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