There are so many reasons families love living at Potomac Shores. Our resort-style destination boasts 2,000 rolling acres. Two miles of shoreline. Mile after mile of trails. Jack Nicklaus Signature golf. A private social and rec center—officially underway. A planned town center. Well-appointed Tidewater homes. A prime location only 30 miles from DC. And an upcoming VRE stop—now under construction.

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Reason #2
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There are so many reasons families love living at Potomac Shores. Our resort-style destination boasts 2,000 rolling acres. Two miles of shoreline. Mile after mile of trails. Jack Nicklaus Signature golf. A private social and rec center—officially underway. A planned town center. Well-appointed Tidewater homes. A prime location only 30 miles from DC. And an upcoming VRE stop—now under construction.
FROM THE CEO

INVESTING IN AND MAINTAINING VRE ASSETS

For many of us, our car is a major investment that serves a critical need in our daily lives. But when we buy one, we often spend far more time researching “a good purchase price” rather than looking at all the costs associated with owning a vehicle. However, a wise car owner asks, “What is the total cost of ownership?”

In maintaining VRE’s assets, we too are focused on our overall costs. Our trains, equipment and stations are extremely important in providing a safe, reliable commute.

VRE is acquiring new, more efficient assets to improve the quality of service we provide. We take pride in our system and use industry best practice asset management techniques to help reduce that “total cost of ownership” over the life of our capital assets. Continually improving our asset management techniques positively impacts safety, service reliability, operational efficiency and overall customer satisfaction.

VRE is investing more than $100 million to maintain and improve our system. Passenger revenue, along with support from federal, state and local jurisdictions, helps fund system maintenance and upgrades.

Last year, the VRE Operations Board adopted a lifecycle maintenance strategy for VRE rolling stock. The basis of this strategy is to maintain VRE locomotives and passenger cars at the highest level of reliability throughout the lifecycle of the equipment while reducing the overall cost. A new facility is being built to perform this work and will be at our Crossroads Maintenance and Storage Facility in Spotsylvania County.

Additionally, VRE is purchasing nine new railcars, making security and safety enhancements, upgrading the platforms at the Lorton, Rippon, Brooke and Leeland Road stations, building a new pedestrian tunnel at the Alexandria Union Station, adding a third track on the Fredericksburg Line in Spotsylvania County and will soon open the Spotsylvania Station to improve our system.

VRE recognizes additional improvements are needed and working to address them. We know how important it is for our passengers to have a safe and reliable commute and we strive to provide the best service possible.

Thank you for your support of VRE.

DOUG ALLEN
Chief Executive Officer
Virginia Railway Express

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Access RIDE online at www.VRE.org/RIDE

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS MAGAZINE

COURTESY REMINDERS

WHEN RIDING ON VRE we ask that you make every effort to be courteous to your fellow passengers. Below are a few courtesy reminders:

Keep all your personal belongings – including coats, briefcases, luggage, newspapers, books and packages – on your lap, on the floor under your seat or in the overhead luggage rack. Our trains can get crowded during peak hours and everyone should be able to sit down and relax. Keeping seats clear will let passengers know they are available.

If you smoke, please dispose of your cigarette butts in the proper receptacle located at the north end of every platform. Do not toss cigarettes onto the tracks, grass or bushes.

While food and non-alcoholic beverages may be consumed on board trains, please dispose of wrappers and containers in the proper receptacles.
LOCAL EVENTS

WEEKDAY FARMERS MARKETS

Support local farms and food! During your lunch break or before you commute home, check out these great weekday farmers markets in Arlington and Washington, DC.

ARLINGTON:

Crystal City FRESHFARM Farmers Market
Crystal Drive between 18th and 20th streets
Tuesdays from 3–7 PM, April-November

WASHINGTON, DC:

Capital Harvest on the Plaza Farm Market
Woodrow Wilson Plaza, Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Fridays from 11 AM–3 PM, May-September

Foggy Bottom FRESHFARM Market
23rd and I streets NW
Wednesdays from 3–7 PM, April-November

FRESHFARM Market by the White House
810 Vermont Ave. NW
Thursdays from 11 AM–2:30 PM, April-October

The FRESHFARM Market by the White House occurs on Thursdays from 11 AM–2:30 PM.

The Rosslyn Jazz Festival to enjoy free performances by some of the best jazz musicians today, a variety of cuisines served by local food trucks and a beer and wine garden.

www.rosslynjazz.com

Bands, Brews and Barbecue
Saturday, September 12, Noon–6 PM
Manassas Museum's Lawn
9101 Prince William St., Manassas, VA
Historic Downtown Manassas will hold its 5th Annual Bands, Brews and Barbecue Festival featuring live music, award-winning craft beers for sampling and Northern Virginia’s best barbecue.

www.visitmanassas.org

Colonial Market & Fair
Saturday, September 19, 9 AM–5 PM
Sunday, September 20, 9 AM–5 PM
George Washington's Mount Vernon
3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy., Mount Vernon, VA
The annual Colonial Market & Fair at Mount Vernon showcases dozens of colonial-attired artisans demonstrating 18th-century crafts and selling traditional wares. "General Washington" will be on-hand overseeing Revolutionary War military drills and 18th-century entertainment including music, fire-eating, sword-swallowing and puppet and magic shows. www.mountvernon.org

Fredericksburg Area Wine Festival
Saturday, October 3, 11 AM–5 PM
Sunday, October 4, Noon–5 PM
Celebrate Virginia Live
2150 Gordon Shelton Blvd., Fredericksburg, VA
This year’s Fredericksburg Area Wine Festival features 100 varieties of Virginia’s award-winning wines. The festival also offers a beer garden, food vendors, artisans, crafters and live music.

www.fredericksburgwine.com
PARTICIPATE IN TRY TRANSIT WEEK AND CAR FREE DAY

Ask anyone who lives or works in the Washington metropolitan area – travel times on the area’s highways can vary greatly. As more people and businesses move to our region, road congestion will continue to increase.

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) is partnering with transit operators across the Commonwealth to encourage use of mass transit options during Try Transit Week.

This week-long educational event, which takes place September 21 – 25, 2015, is designed to encourage Virginians to spread the word about the accessibility of transit and its benefits.

“As our population expands and congestion grows in the Commonwealth, so does the demand for alternate modes of transportation,” said Jennifer Mitchell, Director of DRPT. “Each year, we see more people elect to leave the car at home and use public transportation to get to places like work, a restaurant, a doctor’s office – all while avoiding the hassle of driving through traffic. We invite those who have yet to use transit to experience how they can save time, gas and money during Try Transit Week.”

Worlds Carfree Day also falls during Try Transit Week. On September 22, 2015, motorists around the world are encouraged to give up their cars for a day or go “car-lite” and use alternate modes of travel.

Commuter Connections hosts Car Free Day in our region to bring awareness to the benefits of travel options such as transit, bicycling, carpooling, vanpooling, walking and teleworking. All of these are lighter on the wallet and the environment than driving alone in a car.

“Car Free Day is a great opportunity to get commuters who drive alone thinking about an alternate mode of commuting. And that is an important first step,” said Nicholas Ramfós, Commuter Connections Director. “Our research shows that among commuters who started using a new alternate mode within the past three years, about one-third shifted from driving alone.”

Go to trytransitweek.org and carfreemetrodc.org to learn more and sign the pledges to be eligible to win great prizes.

2015 VRE’S RIDE READERS SURVEY

Tell us what you love about our region and VRE!

Take the survey at: www.surveymonkey.com/r/VRE15

Results will be in November’s RIDE
The next time you’re on a Manassas Line train that pauses at VRE’s Backlick Station, take a moment to ponder why there’s a rail line here at all. The answer lies 17 decades in the past.

In the 1840s, a group of Alexandria merchants, seeking to compete with the ports of Baltimore and Richmond, decided to build a railroad to bring the products of the Virginia heartland to the Potomac River. Trains were still rickety, unreliable contraptions, yet the group persuaded the Virginia General Assembly to sanction a rail line to Orange County, about 90 miles inland. Orange County was already connected to Richmond by the Louisa Railroad, which was later known as the Virginia Central Railroad. They named the new railroad the Orange & Alexandria Railroad (O&A).

One of the directors of the O&A, Henry Daingerfield, subsequently bought 900 acres of land just west of Backlick Road. There were several natural springs on the property, so he called the area Springfield. He then persuaded the railroad to build its first station west of Alexandria on his land. Soon the station was also serving as the first post office for the new town of Springfield, and it made Daingerfield a lot of money.

Indeed, the O&A was the first railroad from the nation’s capital region to the south. Its completion in 1850 meant that for the first time, someone might travel from Boston to Richmond almost entirely by rail.

Then came the Civil War, the first conflict to move whole armies by train. Thanks to a rail junction at Manassas, the O&A was the easiest way to travel between the war’s opposing capitals—and was therefore a route of immense strategic value. In July 1861, Confederate forces marched on the O&A’s Manassas Junction, and so began the war’s first major battle. Later, Rebel troops moved eastward to occupy Springfield Station. Union soldiers eventually chased them off, but the Confederates raided the station again the following year. The warring sides ultimately fought up and down the O&A for three long years, turning the line into the most fought-over stretch of track in the country.

The O&A railroad itself barely survived the war, its tracks pummeled and rolling stock decimated. But like many American railroads, it merged with another line and lived on, eventually becoming part of the Southern Railway. In 1982, the Southern merged with the Norfolk & Western, itself the product of scores of mergers, and formed the Norfolk Southern.

A decade later, as the Virginia Railway Express prepared to open its Manassas Line, the old Springfield rail stop got a new structure, a new name—Backlick Road Station—and a new generation of passengers to travel a route laid out nearly 150 years earlier.
The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) just celebrated its 25th anniversary. The ADA plays a critical role in the delivery of public transportation and in providing independence and opportunity for people with disabilities. The public transportation industry has embraced the act and improved and expanded the accessibility of public transit services and facilities for persons with disabilities.

Since 1994, improvements that have made communities more accessible across the board include:

- The percentage of buses that are accessible increased from 51 percent to 99.8 percent;
- Heavy rail/subway vehicle accessibility increased from 83 percent to 100 percent;
- Light rail and streetcar fleet accessibility increased from 41 percent to 88 percent; and
- Commuter rail and hybrid rail fleet accessibility went from 32 percent to 87 percent.

“Our transportation system is a lifeline for millions of Americans, and especially those individuals with disabilities,” said American Public Transportation Association President and CEO Michael Melaniphy.

“Public transportation provides freedom, independence and access for millions of Americans. As a result, Americans with disabilities can travel to work, school, the doctor, the store or go out to dinner,” Melaniphy said.

“The industry has made great strides in improving and expanding accessibility over the last 25 years, but there is much more to do. Future progress is dependent on Congressional action to fund a surface transportation bill. This funding uncertainty impacts the ability of our country to continue to expand and improve services for people with disabilities,” Melaniphy stated.

VRE seeks to make riding VRE easy for all its passengers, and is committed to providing a safe and secure ride for our passengers with disabilities. Our trains, stations and communication systems are designed to be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

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INDUSTRY AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS CONVENE TO CURB RAILROAD TRESPASSING

In August, the nation’s rail industry safety and regulatory authority – the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) held a Right of Way Fatality and Trespass Prevention Workshop. The workshop brought together public policy personnel from the FRA, top behavior researchers from the Department of Transportation’s Volpe Research Center and large universities, community trespass prevention leaders from Operation Lifesaver Inc. and rail industry personnel.

The workshop was aimed at curbing the ongoing problem facing communities and rail systems across the country – trespassing on the railroad tracks, which all too often results in tragedies that are entirely preventable. In an effort to eliminate this, representatives from several organizations, including VRE, presented on topics ranging from best practices for community and law enforcement engagement to increased fines and stricter legislation.

The resounding theme throughout the workshop was that our industry and our communities have a big challenge ahead of us, because while the statistics tell us that someone or something is struck by a train once every three hours, Americans have a nostalgic tie to the railroads that leads to complacency. People want to photograph themselves on the tracks as well as use the tracks to take shortcuts, to get to fishing spots or to ride all-terrain vehicles. These are incredibly dangerous activities but we must push forward and continue to do everything in our power to engage our communities and work to reverse the trends.

Participating in workshops like this is critical to the approach we take in operating VRE. By collaborating with others in the industry and engaging with government authorities and university researchers, we can focus our activities to ensure we get the maximum return on our efforts. This ultimately improves the product you receive – a safe ride to and from work.

To that end, you will continue to see us out in your communities talking with community groups, schools and first responders, and at crossings along the territory handing out rail safety brochures to spread the message that railroads are meant for trains, not people.

IMPROVEMENTS TO VRE MOBILE

VRE continues to improve VRE Mobile. An app update that fixes the split payment bug and makes other stability improvements is now available on both Apple’s App Store and Google Play. VRE appreciates your feedback and we are working on the following improvements, which will be available in the near future:

• Making the app default to the “My Tickets” section instead of the “Buy Tickets” section, so it’s easier to show your ticket to the conductors.
• Simplifying the split payment screen.
• Adding a confirmation payment screen before purchase is made.
• Allowing you to to add favorite/recurring purchases.

In addition to those enhancements, we are also working toward bigger upgrades down the road, such as:

• SmartBenefits wizard that will simplify the use of WMATA (Metro)-administered SmartBenefits.
• Blackberry and Windows versions of the app.
• Trip Tools to help plan your trips to and from VRE stations.

As always, please share your suggestions and feedback about VRE Mobile to feedback@vre.org. Thanks for using the app and for riding VRE!
SPOTLIGHT ON KEOLIS
MEET JERRY BOLING

Jerry Boling has worked coast to coast in the railroad industry for more than 18 years. As a third-generation railroad worker, it was only natural for Jerry to pursue this career. His first experience came with Union Pacific in Milpitas, CA. After working on the West Coast for many years, Jerry moved and started working for VRE last year.

As a qualified VRE mechanic, Jerry is responsible for ensuring that all of the locomotives are properly maintained and that the traction motors and engines move safely and effectively down the line. Working behind the scenes on the maintenance side, he believes that his number one goal is “to provide a safe commute for VRE passengers, and to keep the cars at a comfortable temperature, especially in this past summer’s heat.”

One of Jerry’s favorite aspects of working for VRE is that the company has a family type of atmosphere. He says after working in the railroad business for the last three decades, “it is nice to work alongside a close-knit group who all have each other’s backs, even when challenges arise.” At the end of the day, he and his team have the same priority: passenger safety and personal safety, no matter what it takes.

On his days off, Jerry is the ultimate family man. He has been married for 18 years and has seven wonderful children. He enjoys taking his family to Washington, DC on VRE. Additionally, he loves being outdoors, as his two favorite activities are fishing and hunting.

Keolis is VRE’s contractor that maintains and operates VRE trains.

He says after working in the railroad business for more the last three decades, “it is nice to work alongside a close-knit group who all have each other’s backs, even when challenges arise.”

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Sat. Oct. 17
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