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FROM THE CEO

Welcome to the Virginia Railway Express, one of the best commuter rail systems in the U.S. Whether you are a relatively new or long time rider, I hope you enjoy traveling on VRE. As summer winds down and a new school year begins, it is a time when many people change their commuting habits and I hope that change includes you becoming or remaining one of our regular riders. The VRE and Keolis Rail Service Virginia (the private contractor that operates VRE) employees are continuously working to make your commute as pleasant and comfortable as possible.

A big reason for the quality service we are able to provide is because of our train crews. So, if you have a question or concern about VRE service, please feel free to contact your conductor. All conductors undergo extensive training and education about all aspects of VRE and will normally be able to answer your questions. You can also visit our website at vre.org, contact us directly at 703-684-1001 or email us at Gotrains@vre.org. Our customer service staff is ready to reply to your concerns and assist you in navigating your trip on VRE. Other important VRE information sources include Train Talk emails and text messages that inform you of schedule alerts, service disruptions, speed restrictions and other information that may affect your trip. Simply sign-up for this service on our website.

VRE provides rider’s guides, ticket information, pocket schedules and a lot more information via our website, on the train, or at our ticket sellers throughout the region. We also host a monthly on-line forum the first Wednesday of each month where we answer as many of your questions as possible during the lunch hour. Finally, we have a Facebook and Twitter social media presence and I encourage you to like us and follow-us as we continue to plan and expand our operation and services to better serve you now and into the future.

Again, welcome aboard and thanks for riding VRE.

DOUG ALLEN
Chief Executive Officer
Virginia Railway Express
SunCal, the developer of the Potomac Shores community in Prince William County welcomed Governor Terry McAuliffe, his Secretary of Transportation Aubrey Layne, Virginia Railway Express (VRE) Operations Board members, other state and local officials, and executives from CSX Transportation to break ground on a new VRE commuter rail station on Thursday, July 31st. The station, to be located at 2451 Potomac Shores Parkway, Potomac Shores, VA will be constructed by SunCal at its expense with VRE and CSX Transportation providing design and construction approvals. “We’ve been waiting a long time for this to come to fruition. I’ve seen developers come and go but we got a gem in SunCal who understands what it takes to be a partner with the community” said Prince William County Supervisor and VRE Operations Board member Maureen Caddigan who served as the master of ceremonies for the groundbreaking event.

Governor McAuliffe said “I get the link between job development and the need for critical transportation infrastructure. That is why VRE is so important in linking employees to jobs throughout Northern Virginia.”

Potomac Shores is a new waterfront community that is being designed as a transit-oriented development with convenient access to the future on-site VRE station and a variety of planned transportation options. The station is just one element of VRE’s system expansion plans to provide greater mobility and reduced traffic congestion along the I-95 and I-66 corridors. Potomac Shores station is planned to open for service in the summer of 2017.

From left to right: VRE CEO Doug Allen; Stafford Co. Supervisor Bob Thomas; Stafford Co. Supervisor Paul Milde; P.W. Co. Supervisor John Jenkins; Fairfax Co. Chairman Sharon Bulova; Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe; P.W. Co. Supervisor Maureen Caddigan; P.W. Co. Supervisor Wally Covington; and PRTC Executive Director Al Harf.
MEET SHARON BULOVA

By Jennifer Buske

It was Spring 1992 when Fairfax County Supervisor Sharon Bulova stood on the train platform, waiting for the arrival of the first Virginia Railway Express train. With tears in her eyes, she watched as the project she had worked on for nearly a decade officially came to fruition.

Now, more than 20 years later, Bulova still has her hand in the VRE, serving on its Operations Board to ensure the once small commuter-rail system continues to thrive.

“It’s been a real pleasure to watch a system like the VRE become established,” she said. “We’ve earned the respect of our transportation partners and we are viewed as a huge success. I am really proud of how the system has grown and matured and the positive culture that has been created and maintained throughout the years.”

The concept of creating a commuter-rail system for Northern Virginia emerged in the early eighties while Bulova was an aide for the Annandale district supervisor. Tasked to work with the Northern Virginia Transportation Commission and generate support, Bulova created FEVER—Friends of the VRE—and quickly got neighboring jurisdictions and residents on board.

“It was a hard thing to do, but there was a whole lot of support for creating VRE,” said Bulova, who is now Chairman of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. “I don’t remember a lot of opposition; the only difficulty we had was convincing some of the supervisors and county staff. They thought we had a great idea but that nobody would ride.”

In 1988, Bulova was elected to a seat on the Fairfax Board Of Supervisors and made VRE one of her priorities. Bulova said they worked with the host railroads to gain access to the tracks, determined station locations, worked out liability issues and built relationships not only with Northern Virginia jurisdictions but also D.C. in order to bring the trains into the nation’s capital.

Finally, in 1992, the service launched; but not without some growing pains.

“We had a lot of bugs to work out with the railroads and we did not grow the way we had hoped,” she said. “There were skeptics that said we should pull the plug and it was a waste of money.”

“Our initial target was 5,000 trips a day on each line and we’ve easily doubled that,” she said. “Nobody is skeptical of VRE anymore.”

A resident of Fairfax since 1966, Bulova was named one of the most powerful women in the metropolitan Washington area by Washingtonian Magazine and has received the American Turkish Friendship Association Women’s Club (ATFA) Lifetime Achievement Award for Extraordinary Leadership in Public Service.

In her spare time, Bulova said she also enjoys running and spending time with her seven grandchildren.

"It’s been a real pleasure to watch a system like the VRE become established. We’ve earned the respect of our transportation partners and we are viewed as a huge success."
On a rainy Tuesday morning on August 12, shovels of mud christened the future site of the new Spotsylvania County Virginia Railway Express station. But the rain did not dampen the spirits of officials and guests as they broke ground on the site in the Crossroads Industrial Park off the U.S. 17 Bypass.

Work has already started on the station and the new third track, and crews should soon start work on the 1,500-space parking lot. Spotsylvania County Supervisors and VRE Chairman Paul Milde, along with Del. Mark Cole, spoke to a crowd gathered under tents and umbrellas, recounting the path to the project’s start and touting the station’s potential economic impact.

“This is a really big step for this county,” said Supervisor Gary Skinner, also a VRE Operations Board member.

Skinner and fellow Supervisor Greg Cebula, who represents the district where the new station is being built, see the station not only as a way of getting the county’s more than 1,000 commuters to and from work but as a way to eventually bring more people and business to the county.

The new station will be the southern-most terminus on the Fredericksburg line and will expand the reach of VRE in central and southern Virginia. It will be easier for Spotsylvania and other commuters to ride VRE and will alleviate some of the parking demand at the Fredericksburg station.

The station is expected to be open in the summer of 2015.

From left to right: Kevin Page, DRPT COO; Doug Allen, VRE CEO; Spotsylvania Supervisor Greg Cebula, Berkeley District; Spotsylvania Supervisor Gary Skinner, Lee Hill District; Former Spotsylvania Supervisor Jerry Logan; Stafford Supervisor Paul Milde; Spotsylvania Sheriff Roger Harris.

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A NEW BUS EXPERIENCE COMING TO NORTHERN VIRGINIA—IT’S CALLED METROWAY

THE WASHINGTON REGION’S FIRST BUS RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM OPENS IN AUGUST

The service, called Metroway, features bus-only lanes along a five-mile stretch of roadway in Crystal City and Potomac Yard in Arlington and Alexandria. It introduces a new bus experience to the Washington region: buses will travel much of the route traffic-free, they will be frequent, and riders eventually will be able to pay their fare before boarding.

Buses will serve stops equipped with shelters, benches and lighting between the Braddock Road and Crystal City Metro stations. “In the next year, the bus stops also will be equipped with fare collection machines and displays showing bus arrival times,” Metro said.

The service, which began August 24 will be phased in over the next year and is expected to boost public transit along the Route 1 corridor and provide an easy transportation link between Arlington’s well-established Crystal City and the booming Potomac Yard area in northeast Alexandria.

In 2015, Metro will implement a pre-boarding payment system that officials say will make boarding faster and allow riders to board using all doors.

Metroway buses will run every 12 minutes along the full route. During rush hour, customers will enjoy more service, every six minutes, between the Crystal City Metro station and South Glebe Road. On weekends, buses will run every 20 minutes.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT WWW.WMATA.COM

VRE RIDERS HAVE THREE BUS OPTIONS TO GET TO TYSON’S CORNER

Now that the new Metro Silver line is up and running to Tyson’s Corner, we wanted to make you aware of some additional bus options to get you to Tyson’s corner using VRE as the first leg of your trip.

Fredericksburg-area residents who commute to Tysons Corner have an alternative to driving on the interstates. This option involves a combination of Virginia Railway Express trains and a Fairfax Connector bus service connecting at either the Franconia/Springfield or Lorton VRE stations. Route 495 departs the Franconia/Springfield station weekdays between 5:35 am and 11:10 am. It returns between 1:11 pm and 7:23 pm.

The buses use the Interstate 495 express lanes, allowing them to avoid the congestion in the primary lanes. The ride from the Lorton and Springfield stations to Tysons takes about an hour. For a one-way trip from Lorton to Tysons, riders will pay $3.65 with a SmarTrip card or $4 in cash.

For Manassas Line riders, the Fairfax Connector bus route 495 offers bus service for VRE riders from the Burke Centre VRE station departing between 5:35 am and 11:10 am. It returns between 1:11 pm and 7:23 pm.

The buses use the Interstate 495 express lanes, allowing them to avoid the congestion in the primary lanes. The ride from the Lorton and Springfield stations to Tysons takes about an hour. For a one-way trip from Lorton to Tysons, riders will pay $3.65 with a SmarTrip card or $4 in cash.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND EXACT TIMES, VISIT: WWW.FAIRFAXCONNECTOR.COM OR CALL 703.339.7200.
THE VRE SUMMER SAFETY CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

Over the course of the summer, you’ve no doubt seen our “Safe Travels” logo in a number of areas around the system and hopefully, around your community. As we approached this summer, our goal was to not only continue our message of safety to our passengers, but to work within the communities surrounding the railroad to spread the safety message as well to reach those who aren’t passengers.

VRE has partnered with Operation Lifesaver (a national public safety organization dedicated to keeping the public informed on the dangers of trespassing on or across the tracks and taking risks at railroad/street at-grade crossings) to support their See Tracks? Think Train! Campaign.

We partnered with Operation Lifesaver (a national public safety organization dedicated to keeping the public informed on the dangers of trespassing on or across the tracks and taking risks at railroad/street at-grade crossings) to support their See Tracks? Think Train! Campaign. We began by hosting the filming of their campaign video at Quantico (full story- RIDE May 2014) and branched out from there.

One of the best ways for us to interact with the community is through a crossing safety blitz. These blitzes place law enforcement officers and personnel from VRE, Keolis, CSX, and Norfolk Southern Railway in the roadway on either side of the crossing. Approaching motorists are alerted to slow down and they are handed a railroad safety brochure and a personalized letter from us imploring them to exercise caution near the tracks.

Throughout the summer, we blitzed Battle, Main and West Streets in Manassas, Featherstone and Cherry Hill Roads in Prince William County, Railroad Avenue in Quantico and Lansdowne and Mine Road in Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania County. These events were very successful with the distribution of several thousand rail safety fliers and the support from area police.

Elsewhere around our railroad, leaders of area homeowners associations have taken up our message and are helping by distributing our fliers in their newsletters and their websites. Burke Centre, the largest planned community on our Manassas Line has agreed to share our message with its over 6,000 homes and businesses, as well as their community centers and pool members.

Beyond the blitzes, VRE is participating in a number of other community events, such as Manassas Park’s National Night Out, which is a free event hosted annually by the Manassas Park’s Police Department. We handed out a number of rail safety reminders and souvenirs to kids and their parents, most of whom were not VRE passengers.

As we move toward the fall, look for us on evenings and weekends passing out safety campaign material as we plan to set-up at popular spaces in the community, such as the Walmart locations in Burke and Ferry Farm/Fredericksburg to get the word out about rail safety.

Lastly, there’s no better campaign than word of mouth. If every person who rides VRE in a single day helped us out by telling five of their friends about the importance of staying off the tracks and not taking risks at grade crossings, our message would reach approximately 100,000 people.
You can tell when Alana Vernon is on duty as a conductor on the Manassas Line by her big smile, Belizean lanyard and eclectic glasses. Owner of eight one-of-a-kind pairs of glasses (with a ninth on the way), Alana stands out amongst VRE conductors. It’s not just her glasses that set her apart, as Alana will be the first Keolis female engineer for the VRE when she completes her training beginning in October.

Born in Belize, Alana came to Virginia by way of Harlem, New York, where she moved with her family at the age of eight. Alana began working in October of 2004 on the New Jersey transit system as an assistant conductor. In 2010, she heard about a new opportunity with the VRE and jumped at the prospect. She wasted no time, moving to Virginia just four days after her first interview with the VRE. “It was an opportunity I couldn’t let pass me by. I live life with no regrets and didn’t want to look back on it and say I missed something.”

Alana was originally drawn to the VRE—as many are—by the conventional hours and the ability to have a life off of the rails. “I was working crazy hours at a moment’s notice, and when you work for the railroad it is number one in your life. You miss weddings and birthdays because your life is dedicated to it. Now I get to do what I love and still have time for friends and family!”

“I love what I do and interacting with the passengers. I love to feel that positivity and give it back.”

Alana relishes greeting her passengers each morning. “I’m the first person that people interact with outside of their family every morning. You never know what one person is dealing with and a nice greeting can change someone’s day.” Alana strives to live her life by a quote instilled in her by her church, “Live better, love better, serve better and give better.” Her dedication to that way of life can be seen each day with her interactions with passengers. “I love what I do and interacting with the passengers. I love to feel that positivity and give it back.” The next time you are on the train look out for those special glasses and say hello to Alana!

VRE RECEIVES NEW RAIL CARS

Four of 15 new Gallery IV rail cars on order from Nippon Sharyo have been delivered and are now in service. The new rail cars arrived on June 9th and after weeks of testing, were accepted and placed into revenue service in early July. Four more cars are scheduled to be shipped in late August and seven in 2016.

Four of 15 new Gallery IV rail cars on order from Nippon Sharyo have been delivered and are now in service.

The new railcars will replace some of our oldest Legacy Gallery III cars that VRE will sell to the Metra commuter rail system in Chicago, Illinois. You may recall that VRE originally purchased these 1950’s era cars from Metra for $1.00 each in 1999 and then rehabilitated each rail car. The deal calls for a total of six cars to be sold; three to be delivered now and three after we have received the next four new rail cars. These legacy rail cars have served us well over the years and allowed us to operate more trains and carry more passengers while waiting for the new cars to arrive. After the six legacy railcars are sold to Metra, the VRE fleet will consist of only 14 legacy railcars which we will keep for now until they can be replaced in the future. Whether you will miss the legacy cars or not largely depends on your penchant for nostalgia and the train days of old.
WHEN RIDING ON THE VRE we ask that you make every effort to be courteous to your fellow passengers. Below are a few courtesy reminders.

If you really want to learn to drive like Richard Petty, please sign up for his driving school. VRE’s parking lots are not the place for screeching, swerving, revving, honking or speeding.

Please be aware of bulky backpacks and shoulder bags. Keep them low and in front of you when walking down the narrow train aisles. Nothing shows a lack of courtesy like knocking someone in the head with your bag because you were unaware of your surroundings.

Please pay attention so as not to scratch or ding the vehicles that are parked next to you when you open your car’s door. Also, leave enough room to the car next to you so the driver can actually enter his or her vehicle.

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