Reason #48
A community to grow on.

There’s a lot to love about our well-appointed Tidewater homes—welcoming families to Potomac Shores. Choose from five new neighborhoods by Ryan Homes and NVHomes. Traditional and main-level living with indoor/outdoor floorplans. Over a dozen home designs with two to seven bedrooms. And golf or forest views. It’s riverfront living only 30 miles from DC. Where every home comes with an exquisite community. Upcoming VRE station on track.

CALL OR VISIT THE GREETING HOUSE: 855-808-6051
NEW YEAR, NEW VRE IMPROVEMENTS

At VRE, we’re proud of the high-quality service we offer and our contribution to making your commute easier while helping grow our region’s economy. In 2015, we provided more than 4.3 million trips, that’s about 18,300 average daily riders, and achieved an on-time performance average of 91 percent. As we begin 2016, I’d like to mention a few of the exciting projects we’ll be working on to allow us to continue providing our excellent service.

Seven additional gallery-style railcars will be delivered this year. The railcars will have 132 seats and a restroom, bike/wheelchair space with additional seating, in-cabin hand holds, luggage racks, armrests and cup holders, coat hangers and an automated announcement communication system. These railcars will be similar to other new cars we’ve put in service recently and will replace some of the legacy gallery cars. More new cars are scheduled to come online in the coming years, completely replacing the remaining legacy cars.

At our stations, we continue to upgrade lighting, safety and security features. And speaking of stations, construction will be starting soon at the Quantico Station to convert the second platform into a center platform, extend the current platform and create safety and intermodal improvements. Elevators upgrades at Franconia-Springfield and Rippon stations will be occurring this year. Additionally, construction is planned to start later this year on our new Potomac Shores Station.

The launch of VRE Mobile has been a big success, but we’re not resting on our laurels. Coming this summer, we are planning additional upgrades to make VRE Mobile even better by including service and trip information.

As always, we continue to work on rail projects that increase capacity and operational flexibility. Currently, we are working with CSX Transportation (CSXT) to complete a new third track, upgrade interlockings and make other capacity improvements to 5.7 miles of track between Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania. This project will ease railroad congestion on our Fredericksburg Line and will be fully completed very soon. With midday train storage at a premium in Washington, we are being creative in finding ways to store additional trains. This year, we are converting an existing siding near the L’Enfant Station into a midday storage for a VRE train set.

We look forward to these improvements to our system as we build on our success this year! Thank you for riding VRE.

DOUG ALLEN
Chief Executive Officer
Virginia Railway Express
LOCAL EVENTS

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR FOR SANTA TRAINS AND TOYS FOR TOTS

VRE continued our holiday tradition of hosting Operation Lifesaver Santa Trains and our U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program. Santa Trains were once again extremely popular with tickets selling out online within five minutes and at ticket vendors within an hour. More than 10,000 attended the Santa Trains with 13 trains at four VRE stations. VRE’s Toys for Tots program was very successful, with over $15,000 in donations and several truckloads of toys collected. Here are photos of these two great holiday events:

GOOD NEWS ON TRANSIT BENEFITS

In December 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Omnibus Appropriations and Tax Extender Package. This package increases the transit commuter tax benefit from the previous amount of $130 to $250 retroactively for 2015 and increasing to $255 for 2016. The legislation makes the parity between transit and parking benefits permanent. Contact your benefits coordinator or tax advisor for more information. Remember, you can use your SmartBenefits® to purchase tickets on VRE Mobile. Learn more at www.vre.org/mobile.

Service Alert

In observance of Presidents’ Day, VRE will not operate regularly scheduled service on Monday, February 15th. Normal service will resume on Tuesday, February 16th.
VRE Announces 2016 Operations Board Officers

VRE Operations Board installed its 2016 slate of officers at its January 15, 2016 monthly meeting. The following were unanimously approved by the Operations Board and took on their new roles:

- **Gary Skinner**, Spotsylvania County Supervisor, as Chairman
- **Paul Smedberg**, City of Alexandria Councilor, as Vice Chairman
- **Maureen Caddigan**, Prince William County Supervisor, as Secretary
- **Sharon Bulova**, Fairfax County Chairman, as Treasurer
- **John C. Cook**, Fairfax County Supervisor, as Immediate Past Chairman

“I am pleased to welcome a group of such respected and knowledgeable public officials that really care about improving VRE. Their leadership and guidance will contribute to our continued success,” said Doug Allen, Chief Executive Officer of VRE.

VRE is Ready for When Winter Weather Occurs

When a winter storm is projected to affect our region, VRE works with our host railroads, the National Weather Service and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) to help determine if conditions will allow the safe operation of our trains.

Safety is always our main priority, just as it was during the blizzard that hit our region in January. While we work diligently to keep the trains operating and on-time, inclement weather can impact our ability to provide normal service. Another key component to safe VRE operations is the ability for you to reach our stations safely.

When VRE operates service during and after winter weather, we want to make sure the lots and platforms at our stations are clear of snow and ice. We utilize a combination of our facilities contractor, VDOT, jurisdiction crews and third party private contractors to clear the lots, depending on who has responsibility for the specific lot. Our facilities crews begin clearing and treating the platforms the day before weather is expected, and continue through the night if necessary to keep everything clear. If you do arrive at a parking lot or platform and notice patches of ice or snow, please contact us at gotrains@vre.org and we’ll get it addressed.

In the event that we do need to cancel service, or operate on a modified schedule, we will get that information out as early as possible, usually no later than 4:15 a.m. of the affected service day. All information will be posted to our website at www.vre.org, on our Twitter and Facebook accounts, through Train Talk text and email alerts, on our station signs and our information hotline, (800) RIDE-VRE. VRE also contacts local media including TV, radio and traffic reporters.

While we do take the decision by the Office of Personnel Management into consideration regarding the operation of the federal government, it does not necessarily dictate whether or not VRE trains operate. We realize that many of our riders are not employed by the federal government, or are considered essential personnel who need to get to work, so we make every effort to offer at least an “S” schedule operation, again, as long as it is safe to do so.

Stay safe this winter and thanks for riding VRE!

FIVE TIPS FOR RIDING VRE DURING WINTER WEATHER:

1. Having a backup plan in the event of a long delay or cancellation
2. Always carrying a fully charged mobile phone
3. Wearing sensible shoes and using great care when driving to stations or walking to the platform
4. Bringing water and snacks, in the event that there is a long delay
5. Dressing in layers

^ VRE’s CEO Doug Allen (far left) with the 2016 VRE Operations Board officers (left to right) Sharon Bulova, Paul Smedberg, Gary Skinner, Maureen Caddigan and John C. Cook.
2015: BY THE NUMBERS

2015 was an amazing year for VRE! We opened the Spotsylvania Station and increased operating capacity with an additional train on the Fredericksburg Line. We launched the VRE Mobile app and our new redesigned and user-friendly www.vre.org. We are proud to deliver high-quality, safe and convenient passenger rail service to our region. Here is a snapshot of 2015:

- Average On-time Performance: 91%
- Of Our Riders Rate VRE’s Service “Excellent” or “Very Good”: 88%
- Daily VRE Trains: 32
- Stations: 19
- Miles of Track: 96
- Downloads of VRE Mobile: +13,000
- Total Trips: 4,374,997
A SAFER RIDE FOR EVERYONE

As transit riders, we have a shared responsibility to stay aware of our surroundings. Whether you’re going to work, to a movie, or to meet up with friends, public transit is a key part of your day. Nobody knows these routes like you do. Nobody can spot when something is out of place better than you can. So let’s work together to make our rides as safe as possible.

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.

ABNORMAL TRAVEL

We all miss our stops occasionally, but riding consecutive round trips on the same route without getting off is not normal. Neither is staying at a bus or train station for a long period of time without boarding. Other unusual travel behavior may include evasive answers to common questions regarding destinations or deliberate attempts to avoid making contact with others.

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.

Suspicous 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 riding transit safer for everyone, visit SecureTransit.org.

This ad was purchased with funds provided by the US Department of Homeland Security.
VRE ANALYZES RIDERSHIP TRENDS

Last fall, VRE revised schedules and added an additional train on the Fredericksburg Line. Now both lines have 16 trains. With the revised schedules, VRE continues to analyze daily data looking at new ridership trends. A few things we have noticed include:

- The new train, slotted between 301 and the former 303, has been very popular, carrying between 550 and 650 passengers each day.
- The former 303, which was moved ten minutes earlier to allow for separation from Amtrak train 125, remains popular, carrying 500-600 passengers per day.
- The new 307 train carries the most passengers, between 900 and 1,300.

On January 4th, VRE changed 307 to be an eight-car set and 309 to be a seven-car set. VRE will continue to monitor ridership and make consist adjustments if necessary. We appreciate all of the feedback we have received and welcome continued comments and suggestions.

Imagine your home, totally organized!

40% Off Plus Free Installation

40% off any order of $1000 or more. 30% off any order of $700 or more. Not valid with any other offer. Free installation with any complete unit order of $500 or more. With incoming order, at time of purchase only.
Tony Arthur spends his day helping passengers make their way to work and back home again on VRE. He feels the most rewarding part of his job is greeting commuters. As a conductor, he aims to provide passengers with a comfortable and safe journey every day.

“When she tried to thank me the next day and pay me back I told her not to worry. It’s a part of my job.”

Tony grew up in Baltimore and his first experience with rail began as an assistant conductor for CSX Transportation (CSXT) in 2007. Tony joined VRE in 2011. His workday begins with a staff meeting with fellow conductors and engineers before boarding his train. Then he awaits the arrival of passengers with eagerness to lead them on their journey. Tony prides himself in providing passengers with exceptional customer service.

Since joining the VRE family, Tony continues to reach his professional goals while leaving a positive impression on his fellow team members. For Tony, it is important that all passengers have a good experience riding VRE. One time, Tony came across a passenger in need of money to buy her ticket home. She did not have any credit cards or cash and felt completely helpless at the station. Tony offered her the remaining cash in his wallet.

“When she tried to thank me the next day and pay me back I told her not to worry. It’s a part of my job,” Tony said.

Once the workday is over, he heads home to fulfill his other duties: being a loving father and husband and one of his favorite things to do with his family is watch boxing.

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SIMPLE STEPS TO USE VRE MOBILE

Here are the simple steps on how to properly use your VRE Mobile ticket:

1. Purchase ticket. Select line, station, ticket type, etc. and purchase.
2. Validate properly before you board the train. Monthly tickets validate themselves on the first on the month. Ten-Trips and Single-Rides have to be validated before every time you board a train. Five-Day and Day Passes have to be validated before the first time you use the train.*
3. Present to conductor when asked. Pull up validated (active) ticket in the “My Tickets” section of the app.

Should you have any further questions on how to properly use VRE Mobile, contact the VRE Mobile helpdesk at feedback@vre.org or (844) 353-3408 so we can assist you.

Already more than 13,000 downloads of VRE Mobile have occurred! Learn more at: www.vre.org/mobile.

*You may notice a flashing expiration time after you first validate the ticket. This time should only be flashing for four minutes after you depart the station. If you have been on the train for five minutes or longer after you departed your station and your expiration time is flashing, you have not properly validated your ticket and are subject to a summons.
WE’RE LISTENING TO OUR RIDERS

We received many comments and feedback from the 2015 Customer Service Survey (results published in the October 2015 issue of RIDE). Here are some suggestions and questions from our riders, we wanted to follow up on:

POST REAL-TIME DELAYS ON VRE.ORG.
Real-time delay information can be found on our new website under “Train Status.” Any Train Talk delay alerts that have been sent to riders are also posted on our website.

MAKE VRE.ORG MOBILE FRIENDLY.
Our new website was launched in November and was specifically designed to be mobile friendly.

WHY DO BIKE RIDERS PAY FOR ONE TICKET, BUT TAKE UP MULTIPLE SEATS?
Only half of the priority seating area in the northern-most car of bike-designated trains is specifically reserved for bikes. If a passenger chooses to sit in this area, they may be asked to move to a different part of the train if this area needs to be utilized. There should be plenty of other seating onboard the rest of the train. If you ever require a seat, speak to a conductor and they will be happy to assist.

MORE PARKING IS NEEDED AT THE FREDERICKSBURG STATION.
Now that the Spotsylvania Station is open with its 1,500 parking spaces, it has decreased parking demand in Fredericksburg.

We are always happy to receive rider feedback. You can reach out to us through the Contact/Forms section on www.vre.org, gotrains@vre.org, (703) 684-1001 or TTY (703) 684-0551.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

Serving the counties of Spotsylvania, Stafford, and Westmoreland and the City of Fredericksburg. Free CRRL library cards also available to those who have library cards with Caroline, Culpeper, Fauquier, Orange, or Prince William counties.

Online all the time. Anywhere you are.

Browse and borrow for free with your library card at librarypoint.org/ebooks
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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