



VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

Update



703-684-1001

www.vre.org

August 22, 2007

Editor's Note:

As the dog days of summer wind down, there are still plenty of things to look forward to. Maybe not with the same glee that we all look forward to our summer vacations, but good things nonetheless.

Several of our stations are already seeing our new station message signs. Much larger than their older counterparts, we look forward to their placement at all of our stations. If you haven't seen one yet, a picture can be found on page 3.

The first of the 50 new rail cars will be delivered this winter. While summer will be a memory by then, these new cars will be the answer to the A/C problems we have tried to work through. Our older cars simply have not been up to snuff. As the weather cools, we expect fewer problems with the HVAC units on the older cars.

Until then, enjoy the last remaining days of summer (we know the kids are!) and have a safe Labor Day holiday!

Burke Centre Garage Halfway Complete

Riders using the Burke Centre station have surely kept a close eye on the construction of the greatly anticipated parking garage, which is now halfway completed. Crews began work last summer, and the project is scheduled to be completed by next summer.

What exactly have they been up to, though, and what's next? Progress up to now has been difficult to clearly see, because so much of it has involved below-surface foundational work and surface work that is relatively low in the "wow" factor. More precisely, the Fairfax County crews have completed one surface lot (already in use); the foundation for the garage, including

a retaining wall along the track; and the foundation for the 80-foot long platform extension.

Construction of the platform extension will start this week. Delivery of large sections of pre-cast concrete that will be used to build the platform extension (which will be scheduled after morning rush hour and before the afternoon rush) should be completed by the end of October. Crews will also begin building the canopy over the platform construction, which

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SmartBenefits Personalized Account FAQ

With the personalized SmartBenefits account, VRE riders will be able to access their transit benefits at an Arlington County Commuter Store or through a mail order account with CommuterDirect to purchase VRE tickets without having to use paper Metrocheks.

Who is eligible to have a SmartBenefits personalized account?

In order to be eligible for a Commuter Store or CommuterDirect personalized account, VRE riders must:

- Work for an employer that participates in the WMATA SmartBenefits program.
- Have or be willing to get a registered SmartTrip card.
- Purchase VRE tickets from an Arlington County based Commuter Store or be willing to establish a recurring mail order account with CommuterDirect.

Will I be able to access SmartBenefits at other VRE vendors?

No, personalized accounts will only be available from an Arlington County Commuter Store (Crystal City, Rosslyn, and Ballston) or by mail through CommuterDirect.

How do I establish a SmartBenefits personalized account?

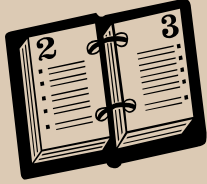
You can only register for a SmartBenefits personalized account if your employer has registered you in the WMATA SmartBenefits program. Once registered by your employer:

1. Go to WMATA's website
2. Access the SmartBenefits webpage
3. Click on the "Van pools" link

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Burke Centre Garage

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Upcoming Dates

Monday, September 3
Labor Day
No VRE Service

Tuesday, September 11
On-Line Forum
12noon – 1:00p

will allow passengers to begin using the longer platform well before the garage is completed.

Next, the connector walkway, elevator and stair tower will be built, and finally, the garage itself.

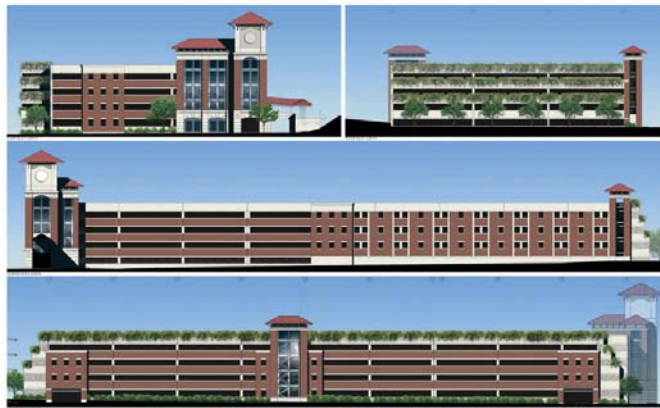
“During these phases, particularly during the time that the pre-cast concrete is being delivered, we’ll lose 5 to 10 additional parking spaces,” said Sirel Mouchantaf, VRE’s director of construction and facilities. “They’ll also need to barricade a portion of the west side of the platform when they begin building the extension, using about 20 feet of space to create a safety buffer zone between the construction and commuters. After about two months, however, the platform will be opened up again, and we don’t

expect any further disruptions or additional lost parking spaces for the duration of the project.”

“Overall, things are going really well,” Mouchantaf added. “The project is on schedule, and the County has put up more traffic control signs and redid the parking lot striping to improve vehicle circulation around the site. From this point on, observers will really start seeing more obvious progress, and because the concrete will be pre-cast, fall and winter temperatures will not affect the pace of construction. High winds could slow things down if crane work is to be done that day, but otherwise crews should really start gaining momentum this week.”

The \$28.8 million project is being federally funded through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program and federal earmarks. By its completion in summer 2008, the facility will boast approximately 1,292 garage spaces and 224 surface spaces, with a designated bus loop, “kiss and ride” drop-off area, bus shelters, elevators and stairways, a covered walkway to the train platform, and pedestrian and accessible amenities. The County is also designing and constructing pedestrian improvements at the Burke Centre

Parkway/Roberts Parkway intersection, as well as trail connections from the south and east to the new garage facility. With brick facades, decorative planters, and a clock tower, the architectural design aims to please, as well.



The Burke Centre Parking Garage is halfway complete.

The design of the project, which is a part of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Four-Year Transportation Program, is the result of extensive coordination between federal agencies, Fairfax County (Public Works and Transportation), the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), VRE, the local Burke Centre community, and commuters.

Editor’s note: Manassas riders will soon have their own construction project to watch: VRE opened up bids for the construction of the Manassas parking garage last week, and they hope to begin construction on that garage next month!



VRE Update is a publication of Virginia Railway Express. The newsletter is published bi-weekly 24 times per year. Stories included are for the sole use of VRE riders and its supporters. Comments and questions may be directed to VRE Customer Service at gotrains@vre.org or at (703) 684-1001.

New Signs Provide Clear, Quick Messaging

Technology has come a long way in the 15 years that VRE has been in operation. One of the most visible reminders of an older, outdated system could be found in VRE's variable message signs (VMS) that provides information to riders on the status of oncoming trains.

Installed in 1994, they have served their purpose well, but passengers often commented that they were hard to read. They may have missed half the message as it scrolled by, or they were unable to decipher the cryptic wording often used on small signs.

That's all changing this summer, as VRE has recently completed the pilot testing of two new liquid crystal display (LCD) signs at the Manassas Park and Alexandria stations, replacing the old, obsolete LED (light emitting diode) signs.

"The pilot went smoothly," said Lou Woolner, one of VRE's project managers. "We had a small learning curve in terms of how to best mount the new signs, but otherwise everything went well."

And the signs are impressive. By switching to LCDs, they're as clear as any television currently being made today, but larger. We can now put an entire message on the screen at once. Best of all, everything can be done remotely from our headquarters, ensuring that all stations receive the exact same communication simultaneously. It's really a very impressive system.

Now that the pilot phase is completed, VRE has moved ahead in installing the new signs at other stations and plans to have all stations outfitted by the end of this year. Thus far, the signs at Fredericksburg and Quantico have been fully installed and are displaying messages. The L'Enfant and Crystal City stations will be next to have signs installed.

"Replacing signs may seem like a small thing," Woolner added, "but when you see the difference these make in our ability to communicate clearly and efficiently, I think everyone will realize what a difference these new signs make."



The new variable message sign at the Alexandria station: The darker rectangle underneath the VRE logo will show the train status information, while the bottom portion will be reserved for lengthier detailed messages, like the one shown here.

Courtesy Corner

Quiet Car Courtesies

As most of you already know, passengers ride in the Quiet Car to take advantage of an atmosphere of peace and placidity. Cell phones are not allowed and any talk that must occur should be in whispers.

We want to take this opportunity to remind riders of another courtesy, one of civility rather than hostility. The quiet car should be thought of by passengers more in terms of a library rather than in terms of absolute silence. Should you be in the Quiet Car and encounter a fellow rider who may be talking too loudly, politely remind them that they are in the Quiet Car and kindly ask them to keep noise to a minimum.

While we encourage riders to "police" the Quiet Cars, extreme behavior by anyone is unacceptable. Remember, the Quiet Cars exist as a courtesy and we don't want that courtesy abused.

SmartBenefits

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Safety Sense

General parking lot safety reminders include driving slowly and cautiously while watching out for both pedestrians and vehicles. Also, be sure to obey all traffic signs, signals, and directional pointers.

For those passengers using the parking garage in Woodbridge (and for those who will eventually be using parking garages at Burke Centre and Manassas) it is always a good idea to have your lights on while inside the garage. This helps you see (and be seen by) others.

4. Select "Passenger Login" and set up a new account and register your SmarTrip card number with either the Commuter Store or CommuterDirect

5. Select the amount of your monthly transit benefit that you want to allocate to this account. (If you register only a portion of your transit benefit to your personalized account, the remaining balance will be stored on your SmarTrip card but will not be usable towards your VRE ticket).

How do I use SmartBenefits at The Commuter Store?

You will be able to go into an Arlington County Commuter Store and request to purchase VRE tickets with funds from your personalized account, almost like using a gift card at a name brand store. Customers must present the SmarTrip card that is enrolled with The Commuter Store account and a valid photo ID.

How do I use Smart Benefits with CommuterDirect.com?

You will be able to purchase tickets by mail online at www.CommuterDirect.com. You will have to first set up a CommuterDirect account. CommuterDirect will then automatically apply your transit benefits to your CommuterDirect account. Once you identify your ticket needs, either through a recurring order or a one time order, your tickets will be mailed via 2-day courier service. Recurring orders will be mailed on the first business day after the 22nd of each month.

If your transit benefit does not cover the full purchase price of your order, CommuterDirect will charge the remaining balance to the credit card you have on file with your account.

NOTE: The normal \$6.50 mailing fee will be waived and paid for by VRE for those ordering VRE tickets using SmartBenefits.

What do I do if I find an error in my SmartBenefits, Commuter Store or CommuterDirect account?

You can access your SmartBenefits account records through WMATA's SmartBenefits webpage to verify that transit benefits have been allocated as directed to either the Commuter Store or CommuterDirect. You should contact your employer if there is a discrepancy in the amount of the transit benefits allocated from your employer to WMATA.

You can also get an account history from The Commuter Store or CommuterDirect that contains the date, time and product purchased from your account for up to the previous six months.

When will SmartBenefits personalized accounts be available?

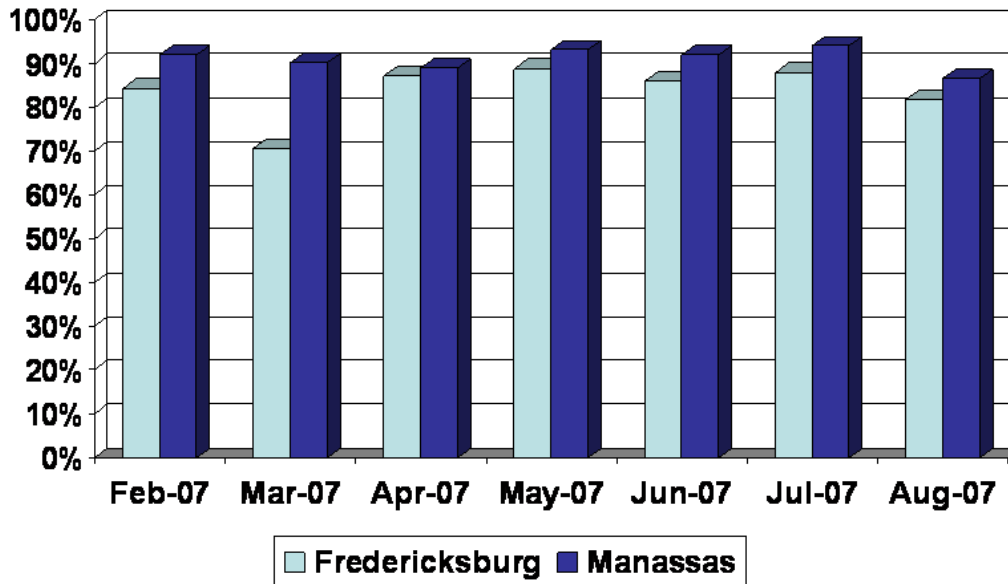
VRE tickets will be available for the month of October 2007. Before you can receive your tickets, you will need to:

1. Change your benefit allocation with your employer – **anytime between August 16 and September 15.**
2. Register online for SmartBenefits through www.metroopensdoors.com and choose to have your benefits allocated to either The Commuter Store or CommuterDirect – **at anytime between September 1 and September 15. *This cannot be done unless Step 1 has been completed.***
3. If buying tickets by mail through CommuterDirect, set up an account online by September 15 at www.CommuterDirect.com. Your October ticket(s) will be sent by October 1.
4. If purchasing tickets at an Arlington Commuter Store, you may purchase ticket(s) beginning September 25. However, after your first month, you should be able to purchase tickets as early as the first business day after the 22nd of the month.

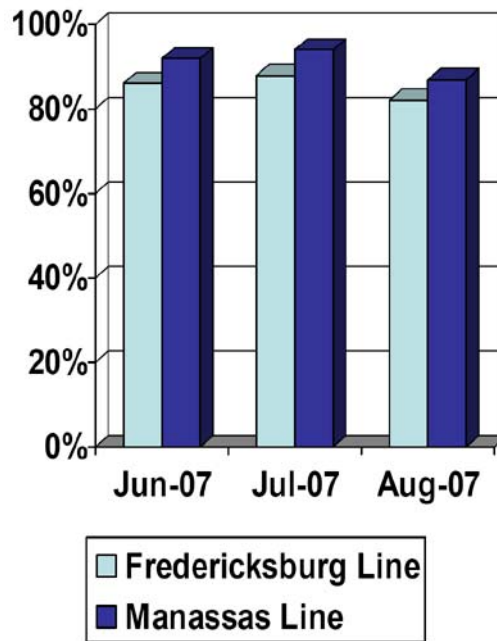
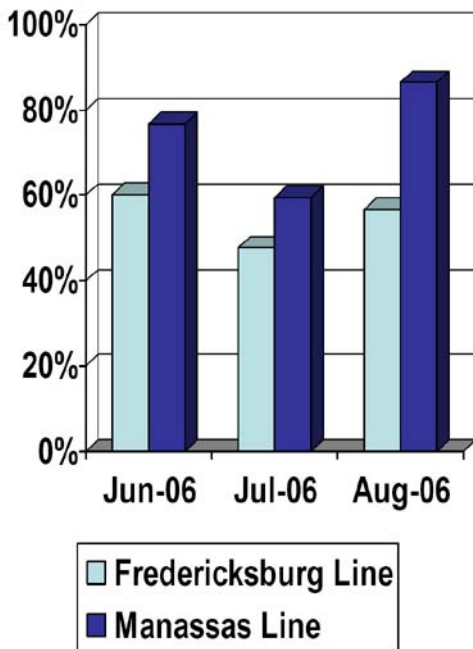
On-Time Performance

Below are two views of our on-time performance. The first is a look at the trend over the last six months. The second compares last year's on-time performance with the same months this year. Please note that August numbers for both years include the statistics through August 17.

Last Six Months



Comparison of Summer 2006 with Summer 2007



On-Time Performance by Train for the month of July 2007

Fredericksburg Line

300 – 95%
 302 – 95%
 304 – 95%
 306 – 90%
 308 – 86%
 310 – 100%

301 – 90%
 303 – 71%
 305 – 86%
 307 – 76%
 309 – 76%
 311 – 90%
 313 – 90%

Overall – 88%

Manassas Line

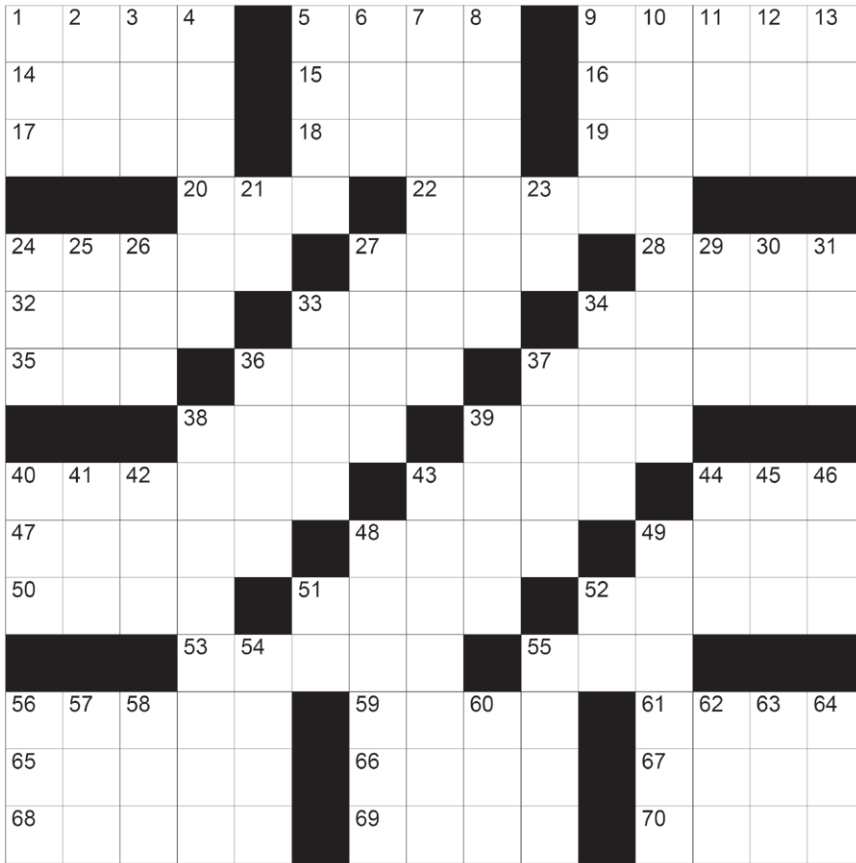
322 – 100%
 324 – 100%
 326 – 95%
 328 – 100%
 330 – 81%
 332 – 100%

325 – 95%
 327 – 86%
 329 – 90%
 331 – 95%
 333 – 81%
 335 – 100%
 337 – 85%

Overall – 94%

*A train is considered delayed if it is more than 5 minutes later than the posted schedule into its final destination.

Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

- 01. Retained
- 05. Arial, for one
- 09. Silk-cotton tree
- 14. Margarine
- 15. Towel monogram
- 16. Slur over in pronunciation
- 17. Arabian ruler
- 18. Military division
- 19. Ripen
- 20. Turf
- 22. Perhaps

- 24. Blur
- 27. To moderate
- 28. One of the armed forces
- 32. Where to cast a ballot
- 33. Step
- 34. Terrace
- 35. Sharp tool
- 36. Gemstone
- 37. Boat: Fr.
- 38. Having a strong odor

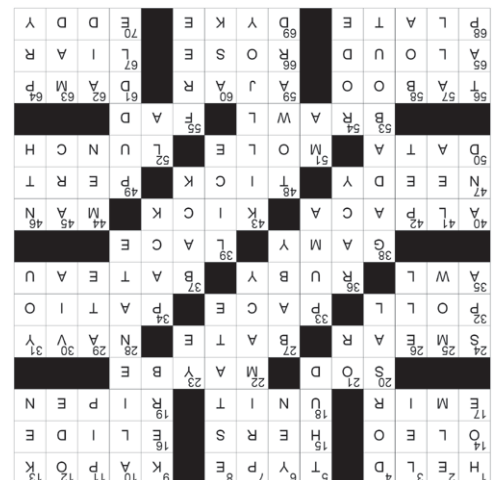
- 39. Decorative fabric
- 40. Lama
- 43. Punt
- 44. Isle of ___
- 47. Wanting
- 48. Summer insect
- 49. Saucy
- 50. Facts
- 51. Skin blemish
- 52. Midday meal
- 53. Free-for-all
- 55. Craze
- 56. Forbidden

DOWN

- 01. Farm tool
- 02. Shade tree
- 03. Hawaiian garland
- 04. Fin on the backside of a fish
- 05. Dull sound
- 06. Longing
- 07. The state of being first or foremost
- 08. Landed property
- 09. Sidewalk edge
- 10. Estrange
- 11. Seed of a fruit
- 12. Lyric poem
- 13. Barbie's friend
- 21. Used to indicate an alternative
- 23. You: Arch.
- 24. Health resort
- 25. Cut grass
- 26. Building extension
- 27. Infant
- 29. Consumed
- 30. By the way of
- 31. Pronoun
- 33. Mountain lion

- 34. Fill your suitcase
- 36. Risque
- 37. Football player
- 38. Social butterfly
- 39. Head parasite
- 40. Conjunction
- 41. Meadow
- 42. Caress
- 43. Party pooper
- 44. Three ___ and a Baby, film
- 45. Circle segment
- 46. To the ___ degree
- 48. In the direction of
- 49. Small pool of water
- 51. Pa's mate
- 52. Calif. city
- 54. Traveled by car
- 55. Gratis
- 56. Type of dance
- 57. The entire amount
- 58. Constrictor
- 60. Question
- 62. Help
- 63. Angry
- 64. Use a crowbar

- 59. Slightly open
- 61. Moist
- 65. Orally
- 66. Charlie Hustle, Pete
- ___
- 67. Prevaricator
- 68. Dish
- 69. Levee
- 70. Whirlpool



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