



VIRGINIA RAILWAY EXPRESS

Update



703-684-1001

www.vre.org

March 22, 2007

Crossing Tracks Can Be A Deadly Choice

Editor's Note:

As of yesterday, Spring is officially here! While we are all looking forward to warmer weather, Spring also signals the start of many different things at VRE.

The time has come for the Quantico Bridge Project to come to an end. The last two phases start next week. For a refresher on what that means, visit our website.

Traditionally, this is the time that we see more groups on our trains. Spring also means the start of our annual Meet the Management program.

Join us in celebrating all things Spring. We know that we are looking forward to all this season has in store for us and hope you are, too!

Whether you're an archetypical A-type or a Zen master, there are times when just about all of us have really wanted to shave a few minutes off our commutes. Unfortunately, an increasing number of VRE's passengers have chosen one of the most dangerous and ill-advised methods out there: crossing railroad tracks at a place where there is no crosswalk, or dashing across the tracks even when the signal lights are flashing and the horizontal warning bar has lowered.

"The problem is particularly worrisome at our Quantico, Burke and Manassas stations," said



Dave Snyder, VRE's superintendent of operations, safety and security.

At Burke Centre, construction of a parking garage has meant that a lot of people find their own spaces at a shopping center on the north side of the track and then cross back over to the station, which is on the south side. They're crossing at a very sharp curve in the track with zero sight

warnings of an approaching train, and because there's no road crossing there either, there's no whistle warning.

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Meet the Management Returns April 11

Hats and mittens have been tossed in the closet, the birds are singing, and daffodils are popping. Spring must be here. And that means that it's time for VRE staff to start wearing their own bright yellow or blue shirts as "Meet the Management" kicks off for another season.

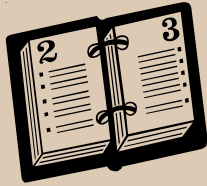
For new riders, Meet the Management is a months-long program in which VRE staff members, wearing their staff shirts and jackets, visit all of VRE's stations during morning and afternoon rush hours so that you, our customer, have the opportunity to share an opinion, ask a question or give us an idea for making things better. As often as people call us or e-mail us, we know that for many people, there's no better communication than face-to-face, and that's why Meet the Management has historically been one of our most productive and effective ways of hearing what's on your mind.

For old-timers, Meet the Management has also meant "snack time," as we've always brought coffee & donuts with us in the morning, and sodas & cookies in the afternoons. We learned from countless riders, though, that most of you were really hankering for something a bit more healthy. So, starting this spring, we'll bring different snacks for our riders: bottled juice and granola bars in the morning, and bottled water and pretzels in the afternoons. (See? We really do listen!)

Beginning April 11, we'll visit a different station every week with the goal of meeting as many of our riders as possible to hear any questions, complaints or comments you may have. We're easy to identify—just look for our daffodil-

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Tally Ho! Groups Are Coming!



Upcoming Dates

March 26- March 30
Quantico Bridge
Phase Three
Reduced Schedule

April 2 - April 16
Quantico Bridge
Phase Four
Reduced Schedule
**PHASE FOUR MAY
END EARLY**

Wednesday, April 4
Online Forum
12:00 noon

Wednesday, April 11
Meet The Management
Union Station
All Evening Trains



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.

Cherry blossoms! Parades! Kites! Tourists! Ahhh, it must be Spring. And at VRE, that means “Group Fare Season,” when school groups, in particular, book dozens of seats on VRE’s trains to introduce the wonders of the nation’s capital to kids.

Detrius Bolton, VRE’s customer advocate who handles group ticket sales, says that the busiest time for groups is April, May and June, with school Spring Break marking the true beginning of the “season.”

“School groups are our most common large group, and although the biggest group we’ve ever booked was 300 people, it’s typically about 25 or 30 people, with L’Enfant being the most popular destination station,” Bolton said. “We know that having that many people on a train can cause overcrowding, so whenever we receive a request for a group, we always try to schedule the group on less crowded trains.”

All groups are also given Rider’s Guides, tips for riding VRE, and maps to help them navigate the train system with minimal disruptions to regular riders.

“Without a doubt, the biggest tip we provide is to arrive early,” said Bolton. “Groups should plan to arrive at least 15 minutes before their scheduled departure time, primarily because it increases their chances that the entire group will be able to stay together on one car. Having that extra time really allows the conductor the time he or she needs to make sure there’s enough room in one car, and it makes the whole process much more enjoyable for everyone.”

The appeal of VRE’s group ticket sales is understandable: Groups of 10 or more traveling together are eligible, and discounts can be as much as 50 percent off the normal fare!

Interested in group fares for one of your own affiliations? Taking advantage of VRE’s program is easy! Simply send a written request to: **VRE, 1500 King Street, Suite 202, Alexandria, VA 22314** at least **TWO WEEKS** prior to your scheduled trip with the following information:

1. Name and phone number of your group coordinator and your travel date.
2. List specific trains to be used for travel.
3. If there are children in your group, certify that there will be one adult over 21 accompanying every 10 children under the age of 12.
4. Include full payment. You may pay by check (personal or business) or charge to MasterCard, VISA, or American Express. When using a credit card remember to include its expiration date.



Or, fill out the group form on VRE’s Web site at www.vre.org/programs/groups.htm. Tickets will be mailed to the group coordinator, unless otherwise specified.

“Requesting group ticket sales the full two weeks before they’re needed is really important,” added Bolton. “We sometimes get calls just a few days ahead, and as hard as we try to accommodate everyone, it’s important for group organizers to realize that there’s a whole host of people on both the Manassas and Fredericksburg lines who need to be notified ahead of time so that the group won’t cause overbooking, and so that we have enough time to get the tickets mailed out. We love serving groups, but in order to do so properly, we need adequate time to ensure a smooth process.”

For more information on VRE Group Tickets, please contact us at gotrains@vre.org (put Group Tickets in the subject line) or call Detrius Bolton at (703) 684-1001.

Crossing Tracks

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It's an extremely dangerous situation, and it's illegal, too—in the Commonwealth of Virginia, it is illegal to cross a railroad track outside of a marked crosswalk. Doing so is considered trespassing and puts you at risk of citation or, of course, worse.

Unfortunately, examples of tragic accidents are not hard to find: in just the past few weeks in Chicago and in New Jersey, pedestrians have been struck and killed while crossing the tracks at marked crosswalks by what is commonly referred to as the “second train,” i.e., a train on a second track that can be moving in either direction at substantial speed.

“The ‘second train’ is a real issue now at our Quantico station,” added Snyder, “since the opening of the new Quantico Bridge has introduced a second line of tracks into that area for the first time in VRE’s history. As a result, the likelihood of a second train passing through the station has increased by 100 percent.”

Track improvements there have allowed track speeds to increase, so approaching trains are coming at a much faster pace. People tend to

walk around the end of a stopped train, not realizing a second train is approaching or, they’ll see one train pass and start to cross, oblivious to a second approaching train because they’re so focused on the one they see right in front of them. It all leads to tragedy.”

The situation has gotten so out of hand, in fact, that Snyder and VRE CEO Dale Zehner traveled out to the Quantico station recently to watch passenger habits, and in the short time they were there, they witnessed more than 10 people walk around the horizontal warning gate, duck around the rear of the train, and cross the tracks where another train could easily have been approaching.

“People walk with their heads down, they have their iPod headphones jamming in their ear, or they’re focused on a cell phone conversation. The result is a loss of situational awareness which can lead, quite honestly, to death,” Snyder concluded. “We simply cannot state the facts more clearly: Never ignore or go around flashing red lights and a horizontal gate. Never cross a railroad track anywhere but a crosswalk. And always look and listen if you want to live.”

Meet the Management

Continued from page 1

yellow or iris blue shirts. And, we’re easy to find: usually at the entrance to the station.

And, for the first time ever, we won’t slow down during the dog days of summer. In the past, we had always put Meet the Management on hold during July and August, figuring that vacationing riders would miss out. But we’ve learned that it’s often during the summer months that people most want to talk ... with annoyances such as summer heat restrictions on people’s minds, we need to be out there.

So, this year, our Meet the Management series will run from April through August. Keep an eye out for us, and please come talk with us!

Want to know when we’ll be at a station near you? Check out www.vre.org/feedback/mtm.htm. In the meantime, we’ll be at Union Station (evening trains) on April 11, L’Enfant (evening trains) on April 18, and Crystal City (evening trains) on April 25.

Courtesy Corner

As you gather your belongings to detrain, please remember that trash receptacles are available for your newspapers, empty water bottles, empty coffee cups, and/or any other “stuff” you no longer need.

Of course, if you are more environmentally minded, newspaper recycling bins are located at the majority of our stations!

Many of our train sets provide service more than once during the rush hours. Since the time between runs is so short, we are not able to perform a trash sweep in between.

To make the train an enjoyable experience for everyone, we need your help. Take your belongings with you and if you don’t want to keep something, just throw it away. Thank you for helping to keep our trains clean.

Get Your Daily Download Before You Ride!

On-Time Performance by Train for the month of March 2007*

Fredericksburg Line

300 – 94%
 302 – 74%
 304 – 78%
 306 – 63%
 308 – 67%
 310 – 79%

301 – 92%
 303 – 83%
 305 – 95%
 307 – 89%
 309 – 95%
 311 – 100%
 313 – 89%

Overall – 84.3%

Manassas Line

322 – 94%
 324 – 89%
 326 – 94%
 328 – 100%
 330 – 72%
 332 – 95%

325 – 89%
 327 – 84%
 329 – 94%
 331 – 100%
 333 – 94%
 335 – 89%
 337 – 94%

Overall – 91.9%

*A train is considered delayed if it is more than 5 minutes late into its final destination.

Last summer, VRE began posting delay information on its website every day. Information posted there includes the total length and a brief description of the delay. The previous day's information is updated by noon, usually earlier.

Information about free ride certificates (FRCs), the on-time performance for each line, and any other follow-up information that you may need is updated by 12:00 p.m. the following day. Summary percentages of each line's overall on-time performance are also provided every day.

"Ever since we launched the 'Daily Download,'" said Detrius Bolton, a VRE customer advocate, "the number of people who have had to call in to find out what happened

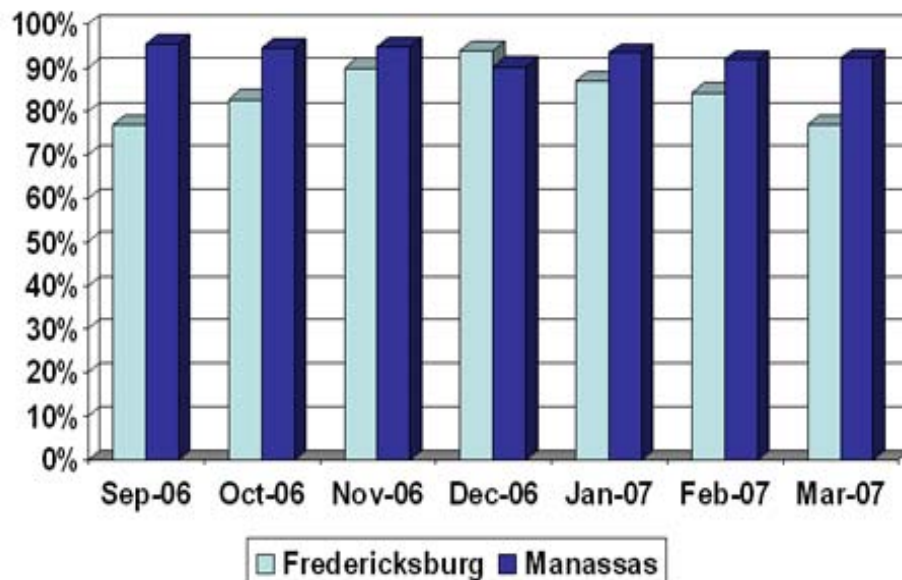
has dropped, as more and more people are getting their information from the site."

It's been especially helpful in situations where a passenger may not have gotten all the information they wanted onboard the train and still have lingering questions. By having all of the information about every delay situation posted online, the vast majority of rider questions can be answered at their convenience. We've also archived all entries since its inception, giving passengers some historical perspective if they're interested in additional research on the timeliness of their particular trains.

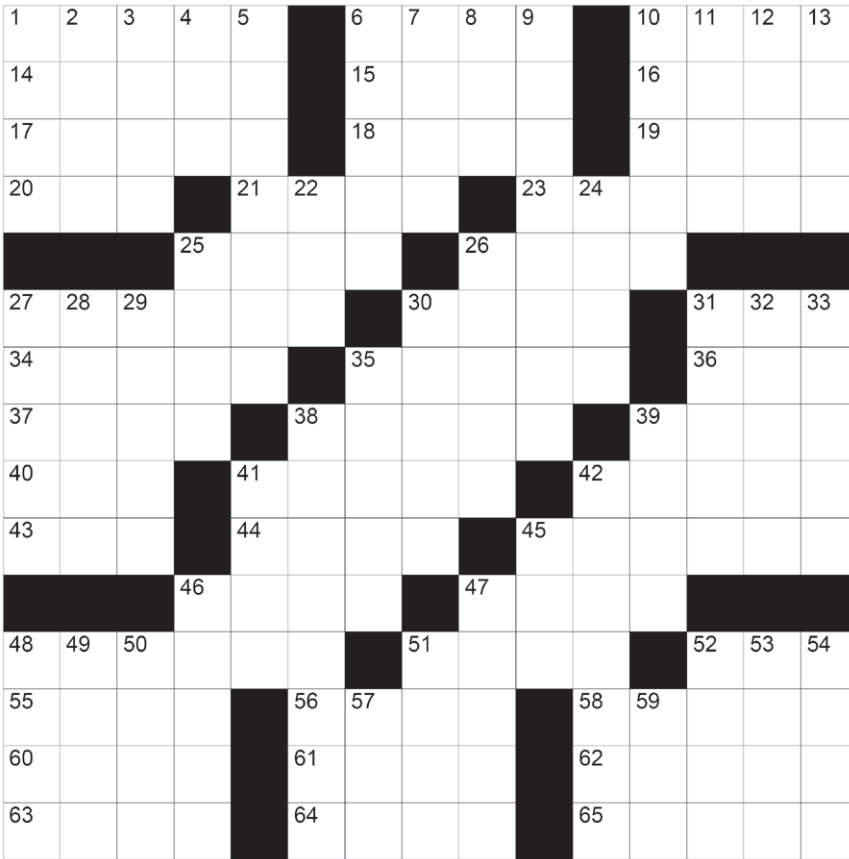
Interested in making the Daily Download a daily habit? Visit www.vre.org/service/daily-download.html and bookmark it today!

Overall On-Time Performance

*March numbers are through March 19, 2007



Duck Soup



ACROSS

- 01. Saying
- 06. London gallery
- 10. — dive
- 14. Great Lake
- 15. Angle between stem and branch
- 16. Tropical bulb
- 17. Like pond scum
- 18. The — Ranger
- 19. Suffix for a base

- 20. Party acronym
- 21. Golf club
- 23. C6H5OH; disinfectant
- 25. Level
- 26. Norse god of thunder
- 27. — trot
- 30. Rime
- 31. — days
- 34. Foreigner

- 35. Rotates
- 36. Public transportation system
- 37. School groups
- 38. Thai breed of cats
- 39. Prejudice
- 40. Sea eagle
- 41. Twosomes
- 42. Do's and —
- 43. College entrance exam

DOWN

- 01. King of Israel
- 02. Fittingly
- 03. Jason's ship
- 04. Tibetan gazelle
- 05. Invigorate; animate
- 06. Claw
- 07. Part of a neuron
- 08. Metal
- 09. — ears
- 10. Range animal
- 11. Farm cart
- 12. Italian river
- 13. Christmas carol
- 22. King (Sp.)
- 24. — d'oeuvres
- 25. Metes out
- 26. Jewish documents
- 27. Audio or video
- 28. Excessive
- 29. Laughing

- 30. Move with haste
- 31. Sip
- 32. Mexican grass
- 33. Flatulent
- 35. Transparent linen
- 38. — court
- 39. Femur, for one
- 41. Having little money
- 42. Girl from Kansas
- 45. Coffee cup
- 46. Discourage
- 47. Groom
- 48. — pajamas
- 49. Got off
- 50. — Lisa
- 51. Heraldic cry
- 52. — brain
- 53. Church recess
- 54. Gen—; well bred
- 57. Antiballistic missile
- 59. Pooh's friend

- 44. Mere
- 45. — business
- 46. Venetian magistrate
- 47. Free from contamination
- 48. Kodak invention
- 51. Therefore
- 52. — boy
- 55. Tons (sl.)
- 56. Talk irrationally
- 58. Garbage (sl.)
- 60. Prong
- 61. Orchestral instrument
- 62. — laugh
- 63. Polaris, for one
- 64. Augury
- 65. Swiss cry

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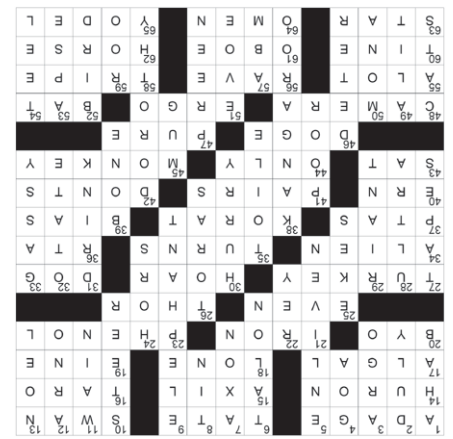
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Stafford County

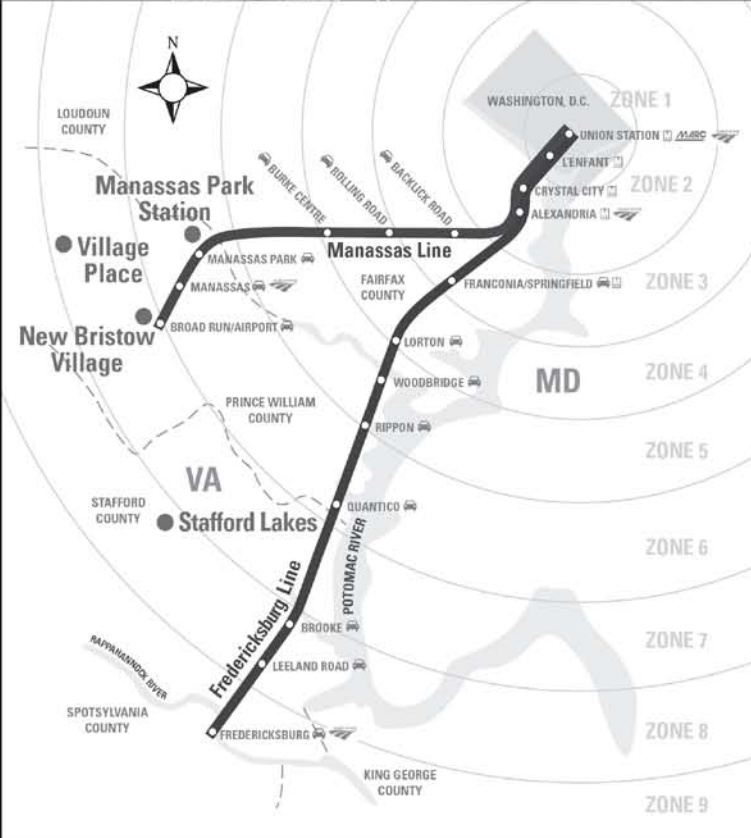


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