



Potomac Shores VRE station construction begins next year



Prince William County

Thursday, July 31, 2014

InsideNova.com

By Jill Palermo

State and local officials ceremoniously broke ground Thursday on a new Virginia Railway Express station for Potomac Shores in south Woodbridge.

The \$15 million station is planned to overlook the Potomac River from atop a hilly bluff on Cherry Hill Peninsula. The station building, still in the design phase, is planned to face a riverfront board walk. Riders will access trains via elevators that will carry them down to the tracks, which hug the shoreline below.

"A robust, effective transportation system is key to ensuring that Virginia can compete in a 21st century economy," said Gov. Terry McAuliffe, who attended the ceremony. "This means investing not only in road improvements, but also rail and mass transit, which is why today's groundbreaking is a critical part of my transportation agenda.

"The new Potomac Shores VRE station will be a vital link in the region's commuter rail network, and it is a great example of the commonwealth working together with private partners."

The facility is still only in the design phase, but David Soyka, vice president of public affairs for Potomac Shores' developer SunCal, said the building is being planned to house a coffee shop, a second-floor restaurant and office space for the Potomac Shores homeowners' association.

The station is a centerpiece of Potomac Shores community, a "transit-oriented development" that is hoped to eventually include a high-end resort hotel, a retail town center, more than 3 million square feet of office space and up to 4,000 single-family homes, townhomes and apartments or condominiums.

Soyka said planners positioned the train station, which will open in 2017, to be within a 10-minute walk of the yet-to-be-built office park, town center and resort hotel.

Planners hope the train station will be the catalyst that drives progress on the resort, retail shops and restaurants that are hoped to become part of the town center.

Those elements are likely still a few years away, but Soyka said he's

confident the size of the development will eventually allow it to become a place where people come to live, work, visit – or all three.

“With this scale of commercial [space], people could either live and work in the same place, or we could have people living [at Potomac Shores] and commuting to the district,” Soyka said. “There’s a lot of scenarios. ... [Potomac Shores] could be the beginning of the trip or the end of the trip.”

Although construction on the station isn’t scheduled to begin until late 2015, this week’s ceremony was timed to mark SunCal’s recent agreement with state and VRE officials to pave the way for the new station and other much-needed additions to the rail line.

VRE spokesman Bryan Jungwirth said SunCal’s pledge of \$20 million to build the new station allowed the project to leverage state and federal money needed to fund additional platforms at two Stafford County VRE stations – Brooke and Leeland Road.

VRE hopes to double its ridership by 2040, Jungwirth said.

“The only way to do that is to build more track. So we have an agreement with CSX to build more track and ... to run more trains through the system,” he said.

Prince William County Supervisor Maureen Caddigan, R-Potomac, hosted Thursday’s ceremony and said the station is an important to the entire Route 1 corridor.

“As the community matures and families and businesses move in and life takes hold in the town center... VRE and other transportation options will continue to make Potomac Shores a destination of choice for people throughout the East Coast and beyond,” she said. “This station is part of a much larger picture ... Route 1 and I-95 are clogged with traffic most days of the week. This station will take thousands of cars off the roads.”

A year into construction, single-family homes are just starting to spring up along Potomac Shore’s newly paved streets. About 126 homes have sold so far, Soyka said.

The area’s other key feature – an 18-hole Jack Nicklaus Signature golf

course – opened to the public this spring along with a new clubhouse and restaurant. The neighborhood will be breaking ground soon on The Shores Club, a 10,000-square-foot recreation facility with a gym and outdoor swimming pool, Soyka said.

Earlier this month, Potomac Shores hosted its first Fourth of July celebration, complete with live music, fireworks and a stilt-walking Uncle Sam. About 450 people attended, Soyka said.

“We see that as annual thing,” he added. “It was pretty clear that this is a family place. There were a lot of kids running around. It felt like all the families who were living here were just anxious to meet their neighbors ... It’s almost like they are early pioneers.”