

# Spotsy ready to roll on new VRE station

BY SCOTT SHENK / THE FREE LANCE-STAR | Posted: Tuesday, July 29, 2014 5:13 pm

The oft-delayed Virginia Railway Express station project in Spotsylvania County seems to have finally reached the starting line.

Spotsylvania this week started advertising for bids on the new station and 1,500-space parking lot, and has even scheduled a groundbreaking event for Aug. 12.

But work won't start on that day, as the county's bidding process for the project will run through Aug. 27.

The station is going to be built in the Crossroads Industrial Park off the U.S. 17 Bypass. A new third set of tracks is are being built between the new station and the area near the Fredericksburg station.

The path to this point with the station has been long and winding.

County officials initially hoped to have the station open by late 2013. But technical and funding issues caused initial delays. Once those problems were dealt with, the county ran into another issue: It couldn't secure the 25 acres needed for the lot.

The property owners, George Lester and Fitz Johnson, wanted what they considered fair value to sell the property or to lease it. The county wasn't interested in leasing the property.

The county eventually asked the Virginia Department of Transportation to intervene and secure the property through eminent domain.

Earlier this month, VDOT filed a "certificate of take" in Spotsylvania Circuit Court.

That allows the county to start the construction process, even if the property owners and VDOT go to court to settle the price for the land.

"We willingly agreed to the 'take' and are pleased that this long delayed project is finally moving forward," Johnson said in an email. "However, we have a fundamental disagreement with the compensation that VDOT offered us for the property being taken."

That means the final price will be negotiated while work on the station gets underway.

The project is expected to be completed within eight months after work starts, according to Spotsylvania documents. That would put the earliest opening at sometime in the spring.

The station project includes work on Crossroads Parkway and its intersection with U.S. 17.

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