

VRE third track opens for business

SCOTT SHENK/THE FREE LANCE-STAR | Posted: Wednesday, May 18, 2016 11:46 pm

The recently built 2.5-mile third track from the new Spotsylvania Virginia Railway Express station is now part of the rail system through Fredericksburg.

The track officially opened for service on Tuesday, according to Joseph Swartz, VRE's chief of staff.

The \$8.8 million third track is a companion project to the new station in the Crossroads Station development off the U.S. 17 Bypass. The station opened in November.

The new track runs from the station next to the current tracks and taps into an already-existing third track that ends near the Blue and Gray Parkway.

“This is another great example of how well VRE and its partners, CSXT and Virginia's Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), work together to complete projects that improve operations for all of the trains running through this corridor.” VRE Chief Executive Officer Doug Allen said in a release.

As with the station project, there were delays in the construction of the third track.

Construction was put on hold in January 2015 when VRE forced the contractor, Glen Allen-based Abernathy Construction Corp., off the job for what the commuter rail company called safety violations.

Abernathy sued VRE over the issue. A settlement was eventually reached that allowed Abernathy to use a subcontractor, Facchina Construction, to do the remaining work on the third track.

A larger third-track project is in the works north of Fredericksburg.

The Arkendale-to-Powell's Creek project will add 11.4-miles of third track alongside existing tracks, starting from the area near the Widewater State Park in North Stafford and running into Prince William County.

The \$74.8-million project, expected to clear up rail congestion and allow for faster speeds, is slated to be finished by the middle of 2017.



VRE third track expected to open this month

An Amtrak train passes through the Spotsylvania VRE station on its way to Fredericksburg. Work on the 2.5-mile third track from the new Spotsylvania Virginia Railway Express station is nearly finished.

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation is heading up the Arkendale-to-Powell's Creek project.