

Let's Talk!

The next VRE online forum will start on Wednesday, June 4th at 12:00pm. Click on the "ASK" Button below to submit a question.



There are currently 37 questions waiting to be answered.

VRE Management:

Welcome to another edition of the on-line forum. At our remaining Meet the Management events and other events this summer we will be emphasizing Safety and Awareness. You will note our focus is: staying off the tracks. When you see the phrase "See Tracks, Think Train" give us an opportunity to discuss this with you. Now on to the questions.

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Dave from Manassas, VA asks:

What is the status on the Spotsylvania VRE Station and when will it open?

VRE Management:

We are still waiting on Spotsylvania to finalize the land acquisition.

Ronald from Burke, VA asks:

It would be great if you had a better way of welcoming new riders than handing out citations if they forget to validate. This has been a very frustrating experience. I just started riding last week. I bought my monthly pass this morning for June, but unfortunately forgot to validate my 10-ride ticket while I was at the machine. I get that you want to go after scofflaws, but gee, a little assistance and understanding for new riders would be appreciated. Thanks for the \$100-welcome for a new VRE rider.

VRE Management:

First, thank you for being a new rider. Unfortunately, Conductors have to check tickets and if that passenger's ticket is in violation, they will issue a fare evasion summons. We understand new riders may not know how the tickets work but we are in the development of a new mobile ticketing app with the aim of buying tickets easier.

L from Rippon asks:

Reference bum at L'Enfant Station, 6th street, usu. at the bottom of the steps, and often on the steps. This week I heard him say he has strep throat; he is not only a nuisance, but a health hazzard. Are the steps VRE property? Whatever property he is on, he is a nuisance. What can be done to deter peoply from giving him money? I believe there was some previous reference that if people stop giving him money he'll go away, but isn't loittering illegal anyway?

VRE Management:

We understand your frustration. Safety and Security is still continuing to work with the DC Police department on this issue

shah from wash DC asks:

How can I set an E-maial and alert in case of problem..

VRE Management:

<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/VAVRE/subscriber/new>

Mark from Manassas Park asks:

Anyway VRE could lower the Zone 6 to Zone 4 fare from \$4.50 to \$3.15(6-6) to promote the Burke to Tysons bus service (495), when the silver line opens.
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/connector/routes/495sl.htm> This will be important service when upgrades to I-66 are made in a few years.

VRE Management:

We have no plans to reduce our fares.

Joe from Manassas, VA asks:

When is the long bridge project study going to be complete? I heard there was a potential recommendation for 3 tracks instead of 4. <http://longbridgeproject.com/>

VRE Management:

Continue to monitor the website for updates.

Kendra from Manassas, VA asks:

I'm pretty sure someone asks this every month, but will Manassas 335 ever ditch the throw back trains? They smell wierd, they look gross and it's not fair that those of us who get off later or get caught on the metro should have to suffer.

VRE Management:

Look for the changes to this consist within the next couple of months.

L from Rippon asks:

May's reply to toilet inquiry referenced "please see this link on page 7." Perhaps there was a link there with the original reply, please advise what the title of the link is, so that I may search for it.

VRE Management:

<http://www.vre.org/service/newsletter/2012/November.pdf>

Eric from Burke, VA asks:

When is the NVTa going to vote on funding for potential FY 2015 VRE projects?

VRE Management:

We hope to see approval by the end of this calendar year.

Bob from Burke, VA asks:

Why do the coaches creak and moan (sorry don't know the technical term) as if their springs/suspension aren't lubed? All the coaches do it. It's most prevalent at the end of the coaches above the wheels. It can be very loud. Is it a design issue, a maintenance issue, or just the way it is? Thanks.

VRE Management:

If there is particular car, please send us this information at www.gotrains@vre.

Phil from Burke, VA asks:

First let me say it's a pleasure to ride VRE in very-very clean cars. I have noticed one area that could be improved, being a bit picky. Just below the windows is a small chrome strip that seems not to get wiped down. It has some grime and stickiness to it. I know, I'm a bit OCD.

VRE Management:

Thank you and we will forward this on to our Equipment Maintenance department.

laura from manassas va asks:

I was initially delighted to see the email about the fireworks train. But why is it not stopping at L'enfant, which is MUCH closer to the mall than Union Station? Now many people, especially those with children or seniors, may have to take the metro from Union Station when avoiding metro was the most significant benefit for taking the VRE in the first place. I was also disappointed that there will only be one train--in the evening. I had hoped there would be a morning train in and an evening train in. That way people could go to the ball game and stay for the fireworks too.

VRE Management:

The challenge with using the L'Enfant station is managing the 2,000 passengers arriving at the same time for the return trip. We will have staff at the L'Enfant station observing crowd and traffic patterns to

see if there is a way to include L'Enfant for next years' event.

Royce from **Stafford, VA** asks:

Why doesn't the VRE App show actual time instead of the time it is away based on scheduled time. It makes a difference when your running from the metro stop to try and catch the VRE when the App is saying it is 2 mins away and it shows up late because of any number if restrictions?

VRE Management:

There are a few versions of VRE apps across the iOS and Android platforms not sanctioned by VRE. However, we are in the development of a Mobile Ticketing App and will look to add that feature to our App.

Sam from **Bristow, VA** asks:

Thank you for setting up the Fire Cracker Special this year. I will be on it. However, I'm puzzled why there's no pick up at Broad Run Station. Would you consider adding it to the list?

VRE Management:

Representatives from the City of Manassas requested that we not stop at Broad Run or the Manassas station so that the Firecracker trains do not interfere with the City's own fireworks presentation.

Andrew from **Manassas, VA** asks:

What is the status of the eight (8) new Nippon Sharyo cars that were due in March? Have they arrived and are they in service?

VRE Management:

As of today, four cars are in route to VRE. The next four cars will ship in a three weeks.

Kate from **Fredericksburg** asks:

As always, thank you for the great service. I'm curious why the conductors on the quiet car end of train 302 seem to fluctuate so frequently. There seem to be five or so that we've cycled through in the last month and while it's nice to see a variety of friendly faces, the fluctuation seems to correlate with slippage in the arrival time to union station. We're always a head of or in line with the published schedule, but a few extra minutes can make a big difference when transferring to the metro or a bus. Can we get a little more consistency so the train runs like the well oiled machine it is?

VRE Management:

Conductors have the option to select jobs according to the availability. In other cases, extra board Conductors fill in for other Conductors that are on vacation, etc.

Headaches from **Manassas** asks:

Hi, would it be possible to include this as a courtesy reminder? Many people are either allergic or very sensitive to colognes and perfumes. If you can smell it on yourself after a few minutes of applying, you are wearing too much. There is a woman on train 322 who boards at Old Town Manassas that I have to move away from or I can count on a day long headache. Please remind folks a little goes a long way. thanks

VRE Management:

Courtesy reminder.

Concerned from **Fredericksburg** asks:

I thought the rule for "no standing in the vestibule" was a safety concern. Yet on most days on train 300, the last two cars have anywhere from two to ten passengers crowded inside leaving Crystal City. In addition, I witnessed this morning a passenger (I assume since he was not wearing a VRE uniform) pressing the buttons to operate the doors. Is there or is there not a rule or regulation prohibiting passengers from riding in the vestibules?

VRE Management:

Passengers are not permitted to stand in the vestibule unless authorized by Conductors. Only Conductors should be operating door controls. We will investigate this.

Ray from **F'burg** asks:

Is there a way to petition the city of Fredericksburg to make the intersection of Sofia St. and Lafayette Blvd. a 3-way stop? Folks leaving the City lot fly around the corner and commuters leaving Lot A are constantly at risk of getting T-boned by those knuckleheads.

VRE Management:

We will share that with the City of Fredericksburg.

DeSaun from Fredericksburg asks:

People are starting to get up and stand at the doors at Alexandria for Crystal City, even before the train leaves Alexandria, and people still trying to get off at Alexandria have to excuse themselves to these people and navigate around them to get off. Then there is one single man that also does this at Crystal City for L'Enfant and the same happens at Crystal City. The conductors immediately jump off the train at these stops and are no help at all. People simply ignore those taped announcements you play!

VRE Management:

Courtesy Reminder. We will ask the Conductors to be more aware of queuing issues.

John J from Bristow, VA asks:

We are suffering from breathing carbon/fuel that could cause lung cancer. This is a serious issue especially for long term rider. Could VRE PLEASE temporarily shut off the air system when going through the tunnel leaving Union Station?

VRE Management:

Conductors are instructed to close the vents on all southbound trains leaving Union Station until the train clears the tunnel.

Thom from Quantico asks:

Monday 02 June southbound on the Fred line: Amtrak 125 was running about 20 minutes late and arrived into Quantico on track 3 at 5:07ish. It left on track 3 a few minutes later. Halfway between Quantico and Brooke 125 had to stop and wait for VRE train 305 to pass on track 2 - then 125 passed onto track 2 and had to crawl behind 305 into Fred. Can you shed some light on why CSX would make a faster train wait to cross tracks behind a slower one? 125 had less stops and could have crossed and been out of 305's way faster but instead CSX made the situation worse. What are we missing?

VRE Management:

We will look into this with CSX.

Cathy from Quantico asks:

Who is responsible for maintaining the announcement system at Quantico? The messages that come through from the Amtrak trains are often jarbled or sometimes they don't come through at all so most of the time we never know what track the Amtrak is going to be on.

VRE Management:

We handle the audio system. We will look into the issue.

Francis from Haymarket asks:

Can you give a POC info for someone in charge of maintenance for cleaning the Old Town Manassas station rest rooms? Thanks.,

VRE Management:

The City of Manassas handles this.

Marc from Fredericksburg asks:

Please clarify the 2014 CSX heat speed restriction policy.

VRE Management:

http://www.vre.org/feedback/frequently_asked_questions/faq_heat_orders.htm

Tom from Fredericksburg asks:

Seating arrangement. I'm tired of standing can u do something about the seating

VRE Management:

We are continuing to look for more seating capacity.

Sharon from Manassas Park, VA asks:

When will the ADA cage at Manassas Park be modified so people can stand out of the weather?
Promised for over 3 years now.

VRE Management:

The door was removed to allow access. However, further modifications are scheduled for over the summer.

Rob from Woodbridge asks:

Can you tell us when mid-afternoon service will be added on Fred Line. I heard maybe this summer or fall?

VRE Management:

We plan on adding a train to the Fredericksburg line but the scheduled has not been determined yet.

Kelly from Manassas, Virginia asks:

I've been noticing the 404PM train from Alexandria to Manassas is quite full very often. Are there plans to expand this train (place another car) in the near future?

VRE Management:

Not at this time. However, we will to continue to monitor ridership trends.

Kelly from Manassas, Virginia asks:

Are there plans to ever have an express train to primary stations such as Manassas to Alexandria and/or Manassas to DC etc?

VRE Management:

We have no plans to add an express train on the Manassas line at this time.

Kelly from Manassas, Virginia asks:

Can an additional train be added prior to the 4:04PM train from Alexandria to Manassas? There is a 1:33PM train, however, a 2:30PM or 3:00PM train would be good for a lot of folks.

VRE Management:

There are no plans for additional Manassas line trains at this time.

Tim from Stafford Va asks:

Is it really hard for the engineer to stop in the same place. The engineer(s) seem to miss the platform at Brooke quite often. I would think it is easy to come in slow and stop when needed. Is it really that hard to stop the train iin th esame spot??

VRE Management:

Yes more than one may think.

Dan from Bristow asks:

Any update on upgrades to the TVMs to allow them to process transactions from multiple credit cards for the same ticket?

VRE Management:

Split payment functionality is still being tested. We hope to have it enabled in the TVMs in the next month.

Ken from Fairfax VA asks:

A few years ago, VRE put a nice business card size item in the monthly magazine with the phone numbers for cab companies that serve the stations. It was so handy when we missed a stop or had issues. Please re-run that.

VRE Management:

Look for it in future editions of the RIDE Magazine.

David from Gainesville VA asks:

Lov the new cars. Wish they could turn down the cold air in the morning though. I and some other riders wear coats in mid-summer, which is kind of funny.

VRE Management:

If you have a problem with a specific car, please send it to Gotrains@vre.org

Vinnie from Burke VA asks:

Kudos on the better procedures for oak leaf oil. I saw the inbound afternoon train drop sand on the area between Burke Center and Rolling Road several times and it really helped. Low cost, low tech solutions like that from the operating crews are rarely heard about. Thank the engineer that did it, we didn't have a significant problem this year -- and don't forget it in the future, PLEASE!

VRE Management:

We will continue to monitor the leaf oil issue as we have done in the past.

Jay from Lorton, VA asks:

Can priority seats be marked similar to Metro Rail and Buses by stating "Priority seating for handicapped and senior passengers" so that those seats are made available to needy passengers without the necessary intervention from the Conductor? No one likes to ask the Conductor to vacate a seat being occupied by someone who has no right to the priority seat. Thanks.

VRE Management:

Priority seating is labeled. Please continue to seek out the Conductor if you need to occupy a priority seat.

Kim from Bristow, VA asks:

Why isn't the platforms a non-smoking section? Many of us have allergies and the smokers just set off allergies and then get mad when we cough on the train.

VRE Management:

Smoking is allowed on the northern end of the platforms.

Val from Lorton, VA asks:

Can there be more cars with the dark blue seats than the light blue ones? The dark blue seats are comfortable while the light blue ones have lost padding altogether. Also, it seems trains are departing early from stations. I arrived at Leland Road last week around 7:12 to catch the 7:22. While I was walking to the platform along with others, the train did not wait yet departed ahead of schedule. What gives?

VRE Management:

Conductors are not allowed to leave until their scheduled departure times which are synchronized to US Naval Observatory Time.

Scott from Stafford, VA asks:

I have ridden in both portions of the quiet car on train #308. Over the past few months I have continually heard loud creaking and grinding coming from the floor of the car. It is usually worse during stopping. I have sent messages to VRE in the past, but the sounds continue. Is this normal? Because the sounds do not occur on other trains.

VRE Management:

We will look into it.

Steve from Nokesville, VA asks:

Can you add the Broad Run location to the pick up and drop off for the July 4 train?

VRE Management:

Unfortunately, we can only stop and pick up at the stops listed. Thank you for your feedback.

Lee from Chantilly asks:

As a daily Burke-to-Union Station rider, I can't help but notice that MARC trains are announced at Union Station and MARC riders are allowed to sit in the Amtrak seating areas. VRE trains are not announced, and VRE passengers are prohibited from using the Amtrak seating areas. Why are VRE riders treated like second-class citizens?

VRE Management:

We are currently working with Amtrak to improve our seating area which will include better signage and announcement capabilities.

Brenda from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Why aren't there step-up/down stools at stations other than Alexandria? I see many people struggling to board and detrain the VRE and the AMTRAK at Woodbridge Station. I believe step-up/down stools at Woodbridge Station as well as other stations where folks are having difficulty boarding and detraining would be an assest safety precaution for both riders and the train management. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

VRE Management:

Approach a conductor and they will comply with your request.

Disappointed Rider from Stafford asks:

Not a question but a couple of comments. First, svc last year has improved greatly. Kuddos. Second, disappointed that Meet the Mgmnt doesn't come further south. Are the riders who don't travel further North not worthy of meeting? I only travel to Quantico, are my opinions/questions not valid? Like the old way better. Go to all stations. Give everyone a chance to meet you.

VRE Management:

We will be doing an event at the Quantico station this summer. We will look for you there!

Dave from Springfield, VA asks:

The Lorton platform extension contract was awarded more than a month ago. When can we expect the groundbreaking?

VRE Management:

You should start seeing construction activity within a couple of months.

scott from dumfries asks:

what is up with the future potomac shores station - any progress?

VRE Management:

Planning of the station is progressing.

Michael from Broad Run asks:

at the Broad Run station on the back exit not the one going to Piper Lane. Can an addition stop sign be added to make the intersection there a 3 way stop. Currently there is only 1 stop sign but 3 lanes of traffic intersect there, I have almost been T-Boned at least 4 times there from drivers speeding through. I feel it is an accident waiting to happen. Thanks for listening MP3

VRE Management:

We will pass this comment onto Prince William County and VDOT.

Mike from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

Current Midweek Ridership indicates a need to change the consists. Train Pair 304/309 supports 1095 seats w/ 8 cars; 304 has the 4th highest total of riders and 309 carries the 2nd fewest. Trains 306/303 supports 942 seats with 7 cars and have the highest total riders - just enough seats for 306 and 254 seats SHORT for 303. Trains 302/305 supports 819 seats, yet both trains are short by 78 and 208 seats. Trains 310/311 move 678 & 623 riders w/ a surplus of 175 and 230 seats. Proposed changes: change 302/305 to 7 cars; 304/309 – 6 cars; 306/303 – 8 cars; no changes to the others. 300 / 31

VRE Management:

We agree that some consist swaps are necessary and are working on a plan to make it happen.

Dave from Woodbridge asks:

Any new news on the additional train being added to the Fredricksburg line in the fall? I am curious about the AM time and the potential for a train departing Union Station between 1-3:30pm. A 2 or 2:30 train would be great!

VRE Management:

Our goal is to add a Fredericksburg train by the end of the year. The specific schedule has not been determined.

Hammer-down from Spotsylvania asks:

Why do the trains slow to a crawl around Arkendale? For the last several months I have wondered if the engineer forgot where the throttle was located or if we need to get out and push. Someone said it was "track work" but I haven't seen crews in the area for months... how long does it take for the bed to settle?

VRE Management:

There continues to be track work in this area, which is being performed at night.

AC from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Are there any plans to have trains that depart later then 9AM or even 10AM from Rippon or Woodbridge? I know I have many friends who will be interest

VRE Management:

Not at this time.

Greg from Manassas asks:

On May 22nd Union Station posted train 331 train on track 28. It came in on a different track. No notice, no announcement nothing. Myself & 2 other passengers were left waiting. I wrote to GoTrains and got a boiler plate it's AMTRAK not us. I am your customer, not AMTRAK's. The AMTRAK staff on the platform gave me we don't know nothing about VRE. Union Station has a problem posting track info in a correct & timely manner. What can be done? Thank you

VRE Management:

We will continue to work with Amtrak to improve this.

James from Burke VA asks:

You have a couple of sets of joggers crossing the train tracks at Burke within 5 minutes of train 328's scheduled arrival. Don't know what can be done but I've witnessed most weekdays for about a month.

VRE Management:

We continue to remind our passengers and community of the dangers of trespassing on railroad right of way. Railroad and local police are helping us to keep an eye on this and supporting our Safety and Awareness campaign.

R from VA and others asks:

Thanks for the great service! Your ontime performance has really improved from years past. One question for the passengers- where do you buy tickets for your bags? I've been looking around, and none of the TVMs have that option! And your bag gets the window seat- do you have to pay a premium for that? If you don't mind (and neither does your bag) I may have to sit with you to get the details, as this would be nice for my bag. Thanks!

VRE Management:

We agree. We have asked the Conductors to focus on this an other courtesy issues.

L from Quantico asks:

Were the Quantico monthly tickets discounted at one time and were the same as the Rippon ticket price, say in February? Why was that? Now the tickets are \$250. I was charged \$232 in Feb and used Rippon for a while.

VRE Management:

Ticket prices have not changed. If you have specific receipts to show this issue, please forward them to gotrains@vre.org and we will investigate.

Rich from Fredericksburg asks:

The 307 train is standing room only most days, are there plans for more cars? If so when.

VRE Management:

No plans at this time.

Doug from Burke asks:

I ride the Manassas line and usually catch train #331, scheduled at Enfant at 5:11 in the evening. Sometimes there are several Fredericksburg line riders that once most people have boarded, cue at the doors of the Manassas train waiting for their Fredericksburg train. This means that people that get on last or run for the train have to maneuver around the Fredericksburg line people standing in the

entry door, creating a needless traffic jam at the entry door. If they just waited another minute or two and until the train leaves, they would have the whole platform. Any advice? Thanks, doug

VRE Management:

We addressed a similar issue with Trains 303 and 327 and asked the Engineers to platform their trains at different spots. We will look at this for all afternoon trains.

David from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Is their track work going on in a section of track between Springfield and Lorton? For the past month the train has go very slow in that area. When will it be finished?

VRE Management:

There will be track work in our service areas throughout the summer. VRE and CSX will work together to minimize delays. This is the optimal time of year to get this work done to ensure a safe and reliable system.

Matt from Rippon, VA asks:

I saw the OLI Safety Video that VRE participated in. While their were no VRE trains featured in the video, The Trintity Railway Express was featured and they offer Saturday service, something VRE should do now, not 10 years from now. Operation Lifesaver saw your article and linked to it on it's Facebook Page on May 29. <https://www.facebook.com/#!/operation.lifesaver>

VRE Management:

First, thank you for watching the video. We do not anticipate weekend service in the near future.

Tim from Lorton, VA asks:

On some train sets, why does VRE put 2 to 3 cab cars on the north end? The problem is the cab cars have less seats and so they are crowded with standees by Alexandria such as Train #307

VRE Management:

Non cab cars need to be removed for scheduled maintenance. In some cases, Cab cars are used as replacements.

John from Springfield, VA asks:

Can VRE officials at headquarters and CSX dispatchers see the speed a VRE train is going on their maps?

VRE Management:

Yes.

Tom from Manassas, VA asks:

VRE introduced its current TVM's 12 years ago. Since them technology included touch screens have evolved, yet VRE has not updated. So, when will VRE get new TVMs?

VRE Management:

When our Mobile ticketing project is done next year, everyone with a smartphone can have a TVM in their pocket.

Dave from Woodbridge, VA asks:

When do you think you can add an additional car to the 300 Express?

VRE Management:

No plans at this time.

Emmitt from Alexandria, VA asks:

Why is the VRE station in Fredricksburg so bad compared to stations in Alexandria and Quantico? There is no place to wait inside when its cold and wet and trains are delayed. No restrooms. Poor signage. VRE ticket machines but no Amtrak ticket machines. Flooding. Can VRE makes improvements and does it plan to?

VRE Management:

The station belongs to the City of Fredericksburg. We will work with them to incorporate some improvements.

John from Gainesville VA asks:

What can you do to make sure there are no vehicles parked on the painted crosswalk at the Broad Run Station? There are too many instances of cars parked on the crosswalk and making people have to go around them and potentially into people in cars driving through and rushing to get out of the parking lot.

VRE Management:

We are currently working on enforcement with the local authorities.

Lori from Manassas Park, Va asks:

Why can't we get a monthly TLC SmarTrip card? I use the TLC each month and by the end of the first week, the magnetic trip has crapped out and I have to slow down at the entrance and exit of Metro to show them my pass and have them allow me to go through the gate. I would gladly pay an extra \$5 a month for the benefit of using my VRE ticket unencumbered at the Metro gate. Metro only charges \$3 for a SmarTrip card - surely they could design a monthly card for use in TLC.

VRE Management:

Current fare systems are not capable of this. WMATA is in the process of upgrading their system and we will look for opportunities for better Metro/VRE integrated tickets.

Aaron from Manassas asks:

I believe the loudspeaker on the east end of Manassas station isn't working. If someone could verify that would be great.

VRE Management:

We will get someone out there to look at this.

Marc from Leeland asks:

Just a couple of comments. Every month it is the same questions asked and repeatedly answered throughout the one hour session. Why answer the same question multiple times? You always get wifi questions and you answer it two or three times, isn't once enough? And every month you post and answer the same persons question about smoking. While I am not a smoker, it is legal and it doesn't matter that it is 2014. How many months in a row do you have to answer that individuals question? Try something different, review the questions together and don't answer the same question multiple times.

VRE Management:

How did we do Marc?

VRE Management:

Firecracker train tickets went on sale today. Tickets are limited, so place your order right away! Lessons learned from this year's event will be used to help structure future special trains as long as the event is popular with our riders and there is a demand to continue. See you this afternoon at Alexandria and next week at Franconia/Springfield for Meet the Management. Remember "See Tracks, Think Train" Rich, Chris, et al.