

## Let's Talk!

The next VRE online forum will start on Wednesday, May 7 at 12:00pm. Click on the "ASK" Button below to submit a question.



There are currently 65 questions waiting to be answered.

### VRE Management:

Thank you for completing the survey this morning. Your opinion matters greatly to us. We should have the results by the end of the summer and we will share them with you.  
On to the questions!!!

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On to the questions!!!

### Erin from Fredericksburg asks:

Why is it so freezing on the train, especially the newer trains? I have to pack multiple layers and I'm still shivering. and these are summer days and warm days not the colder winter days that you expect it.

### VRE Management:

Please let us know which car you are referring, and we will contact maintenance to see if we can have that adjusted. You can send the information to [gotrains@vre.org](mailto:gotrains@vre.org)

### L from Rippon asks:

At L'Enfant stop in the afternoon for a couple of days, there has been a very pronounced smell of urine, noticed while standing on the platform, as well as ascending the steps. Is this just from people or do the trains bathrooms flush onto the tracks, as the trains move along? Where do the trains bathrooms waste go? and what is that strong urine smell in the air?

### VRE Management:

The train bathrooms are flushed properly through a filtered system. The liquid you may have seen released from the train is clean liquid. The smell however comes from the vents where the liquid has been released. Please see this link describing the operation of our onboard toilet system on page 7.

### Dave from Fredericksburg asks:

Last month, you stated that all of the legacy cars on the Manassas would be retired when the 8 new cars are put into service. How many consists of legacy cars will remain on the Fredericksburg line after the new cars arrive, and when can you commit to replacing all of the legacy cars on the Fredericksburg line? If the legacy cars cannot be replaced in the next few years, can we at least get VRE to maintain the cars, to include padding in the seats, working lights, and functional HVAC?

### VRE Management:

All legacy consists that are currently in VRE service will be retired and replaced during the first quarter of 2016.

### Concerned from Woodbridge, Va asks:

Each morning on the Express train in the last car there is a gentleman that gets in the vestibule from Alexandria until L'Enfant. This a larger man who keeps on his brown back pack and everyday is in everyone's way and then all moves and turns and runs into everyone with is back pack. He never even says excuse me and just keeps looking at his phone. Don't the rules state there is no standing in the vestibule??? Can these rules please be enforced? And can you ask him to take off his backpack until he exits the train? It's very rude, I saw a close call with him another passenger recently.

### VRE Management:

We will ask the conductors to address this.

### Bob from Woodbridge asks:

There are several complaints about drivers leaving the Woodbridge station and driving straight across Rt. 1 from the right hand lane (the sign says right turn only). VRE has said it will notify police of the issue. As an alternative and in recognition of the backup of traffic, can VRE work with PWC to have both lanes allowed to cross Rt. 1? This may be a safer approach.

**VRE Management:**

Our safety and security manager will work with Prince William County police so they can resolve this issue.

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**Gary from Rippon asks:**

what is the policy when a train "overshoots" a platform and has to back up? do they need csx permissions? do they need to tell VRE Management? This happened earlier this week with 302 at Lorton.

**VRE Management:**

We have engineer trainees working with experienced engineers on both lines. The new engineers will continue to improve the train placement on the platform as their training progresses. In order to move a train in the opposite direction permission is needed from the dispatcher.

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**Terry from Rippon asks:**

Can you make sure "fill-in" conductors are aware what doors to open at each station? over the past few weeks there have been multiple times doors haven't been opened on 302.

**VRE Management:**

We will notify the crews. Thanks for letting us know.

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**Harry from Rippon asks:**

What is the current plan to add additional cars when they become available? all the trains i ride seem to be standing room only or close to it

**VRE Management:**

The ability to lengthen our trains will come with the addition of storage space as well as the purchase of new cars. The current cars on order are to replace the legacy cars. For more information please refer to our system plan [http://www.vre.org/about/strategic/strategic\\_plan.htm](http://www.vre.org/about/strategic/strategic_plan.htm)

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**Jerry from Rippon asks:**

Can conductors be asked by management to make sure on over crowded trains that passengers standing be asked to move all the way to the end of the car and not just stand near the door, causing backups and standing in the vestibule?

**VRE Management:**

Courtesy reminder from the conductor to the passengers.

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**Connie from Dumfries, VA asks:**

Would like to know if you have an update on the Transportation Bill regarding the increase back to \$245 and will VRE consider adding a train between the 1pm and 3:40pm timeslots? May be a 2pm train? just a thought. Thank you.

**VRE Management:**

We will work with our railroad partners on our schedule within the next few months.

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**tired from Burke asks:**

Today was survey day and no one came around to pick up the surveys. No one came around to hand out pencils. Seems like a waste of time and money printing surveys that VRE seems to not care about. I saw several people throwing away their surveys when they got off the train. Guess I am not the only one frustrated here. Printing color monthly newsletters that 90% of the people don't read I think is also a waste. Thanks for listening and can't wait for next fare increase

**VRE Management:**

We had surveys turned in and completed from all trains and we are sorry to hear that yours didn't get picked up. Please contact us at [gotrains@vre.org](mailto:gotrains@vre.org) to provide more information or send us your completed survey. Your opinion matters to us.

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**George from Broad Run asks:**

Concurrent with Keolis providing service, your predecessor began the policy of bringing up each of the trains to the Broad Run (and probably Fredericksburg) platform approximately 15 minutes before departure time. This much appreciated service has been steadily whittled away to the point where generally each train is now at the platform roughly 5-6 minutes before departure time. Soon we might be back to the old Amtrak way of pulling the train up to the platform just in time to avoid a late departure. Can the 15 minutes before departure at the platform be re-instituted? Thanks.

**VRE Management:**

We get the trains to the platform as early as practical, and will continue to do so.

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**M from Bristow, VA asks:**

The Fredericksburg 303 heads south through L'Enfant each workday and leaves a trail of wastewater

along the tracks in plain view and smell of those of us waiting for the next Manassas train (#327). The extremely strong odor reeks of ammonia and other nasty gases. Somehow I don't think this is normal operation for a train in a station nor do I recall such a mess from the other trains coming through over the last several years that I have been enjoying the commute on VRE. Would you address the issue? thanks

**VRE Management:**

Please see this link describing the operation of our onboard toilet system on page 7.  
<http://www.vre.org/service/newsletter/2012/november.pdf>

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**Chad from Burke, VA asks:**

Is there any plan to offer more trains in the afternoon? Specifically, on the Manassas line, there is a gap from 325 train at 1:15 to the 327 train at 3:45...it would be great if there was at least a couple of trains running in between.

**VRE Management:**

See our system plan for further updates. [http://www.vre.org/about/strategic/strategic\\_plan.htm](http://www.vre.org/about/strategic/strategic_plan.htm)

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**Jack from Brooke asks:**

Two things. Enjoy Ride magazine, but it always seems to come too late for some of the community events detailed in Ride. Glad to hear that long term planning is being done, but whatever happened to short term Powell's Creek - Akendale 3 track project?

**VRE Management:**

Thanks for the compliment. We will work to ensure the content in Ride is timely. The 3rd track project is underway you should start seeing activity adjacent to the tracks in the next couple of months.

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**Tom from Manassas, VA asks:**

Are their any plans to remove the handicap equipment "cage" from the parking garage platform in Manassas? Not only is it necessary, but I can see it becoming an attractant for the mischievous.

**VRE Management:**

No, at Manassas the cage needs to stay for use by Amtrak.

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**Steve from Burke Centre asks:**

When do you anticipate the next wave of Fare raises? I work for a private employer and I am very concerned about the cost of transportation. At \$214 a month even a modest raise of 3-4% adds up. Also, if I want to access the Internet on the train, I'll pay my own way. Don't raise the fares to offer wireless service or offer it on a subscription basis.

**VRE Management:**

We do not anticipate a fare increase at this time.

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**robert from dumfires asks:**

would you update the capitol improvements info on the web - it still shows franconia as "almost done"

**VRE Management:**

Yes we will.

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**Paul from Brooke, VA asks:**

Please turn down the volume on the automated announcements. On 303 and 305 they blast at full volume and are a health hazard. The Quiet Cars have become a joke as the VRE violates their own rules. Please respond with a bonafide answer.

**VRE Management:**

The volumes are to be set at 72 db. We will ensure our maintenance crews are holding to this setting on a daily basis.

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**Debbie from Broad Run, VA asks:**

I'd like to know what the status of the Haymarket Station is? We have been waiting for years and all we ever hear is that you are waiting for studies to be completed.

**VRE Management:**

Studies about the best placement for a station are underway. We do not have an estimate of when a station may come online.

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**Dan from Manassas, VA asks:**

Thanks for the nation's best commuter rail. I understand that Manassas's 20th Annual Heritage Railway Festival on Sat, June 7 will be extra special because the City has renovated its 100 year old station: fresh paint throughout; repaired walls; and redone mini-railroad museum. VRE will be giving rides, which are

always wildly popular with the kids. However, will VRE bring in any special historic cars as they did in 2013 with the Dover Harbor?

**VRE Management:**

VRE is excited to participate in the railway festival. Unfortunately, Dover Harbor will not be there this year.

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**Carol from Bristow asks:**

Last Thursday, the Piper Lane exit from Broad Run was closed during the morning commute due to the road being flooded. By 2:00, the flooding had abated and VDOT had removed the Piper Lane closing from its road condition table ([http://www.511virginia.org/mobile/?menu\\_id=conditions](http://www.511virginia.org/mobile/?menu_id=conditions)). Nevertheless, the conductor on train 327 announced at 5:15 that Piper Lane was still closed. Piper Lane wasn't closed then, nor was it closed when we arrived at Broad Run at approximately 6:15, but almost everyone went to the second exit on the other side of the lot due to the announcement. It's hard enough to get out of there when both exits are in use, and this added a considerable amount of time to the drive home. I know the crew was trying to be helpful, but they caused considerable problems for the hundreds of us who use that lot. If you're going to allow your train crews to make informal emergency announcements please ensure that they've got accurate information in cases like this. There's a rail yard there, right next to Piper Lane. You might use of those loud radios you railroad guys seem to love so much!

**VRE Management:**

Our Safety and Security manager went to that station and informed us that it was not safe due to high water and to inform our passengers.

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**jim from fredericksburg asks:**

Why does the on-line schedule show Amtrak 66 and 67 as VRE Step-Up eligible but the paper schedule does not?

**VRE Management:**

Amtrak 66 and 67 were recently added; therefore they aren't on the current paper schedules. Once new paper schedules are printed those trains will be reflected on the schedule as well.

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**Aaron from Manassas asks:**

What's the status of the new cars? Last month's update was that they would arrive late April and early May.

**VRE Management:**

We are expecting the new cars in the next couple of weeks.

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**Betty from Manassas asks:**

Ellen is an excellent conductor that always gives 100% but still provides the personal touch of actually caring for her riders. I asked her yesterday morning on train 328 if it was the 329 from the evening before because I dropped something important to me. She actually went to where I was sitting the night before and looked for me. Such excellent customer service is rare.. Thank you Ellen.

**VRE Management:**

It is always a pleasure to receive positive comments about our crews and we are happy to see them going the extra mile to help out our customers.

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**Marcy from Leeland Station asks:**

Can you please address any planned improvements in parking at the above station? Leeland Station parking is already full for later trains, and the Leeland Station development is growing rapidly, with many new homes. Are there any plans to pave the dirt lot or at least have it graded to reduce the number of potholes and ruts? Thank you.

**VRE Management:**

Our facilities manager is working with Stafford County to get the gravel lot re-graded.

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**David from Woodbridge, VA asks:**

Last week, while waiting for train in the morning, I observed a woman smoking what appeared to be an

ecigarette near the south end of the platform where the no smoking sign is. She blew the smoke onto the tracks, but unlike a regular cigarette I didn't smell any smoke. Is that allowed there?

**VRE Management:**

E-Cigarettes follow the same policy of regular cigarettes. Smoking is allowed at the North end of the platform only.

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**Gary from Alexandria asks:**

Good morning - Keep up the good work, you are the preferred public transportation provider as far as we are concerned. Have the new gallery cars been received yet? Thanks!

**VRE Management:**

Thank you for the compliment, the new cars should arrive in the next couple weeks.

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**Brian from Woodbridge asks:**

When will the stairs to the Rippon station be repaired/replaced. It seems like more and more rust/pain is falling off of them. Also if they are replaced are there plans to widen them slightly so 2 people walk side by side without bumping into each other or their possessions (bags, cases, etc)?

**VRE Management:**

We have a project scheduled for later this summer to replace the steps.

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**KC from Manassas asks:**

Hello, thank you for your usually reliable service, but why didn't riders receive free-ride certificates for Jan. 15, when morning trains were cancelled altogether? I requested but never received any, seems unfair that I paid a monthly fare and received one ride less than I paid for (well two rides less considering I had to miss work that day as a result and didn't ride home either).

**VRE Management:**

The break-even point for a monthly ticket is 13 service days. When we cancel service for any reason there are still enough service days to receive a discount.

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**Samuel from Richmond, Va. asks:**

I would like to know if there are any updates on VRE providing service back to the Carolina County area. It was my understanding from last time I ask this question, VRE and I believe CSX, was still in discussion. Can you provide a update?

**VRE Management:**

We have had discussions with Caroline County. However, there are currently no plans to add service south of Spotsylvania.

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**Joe from Spotsylvania, VA asks:**

What is the status of the new Spotsylvania station - when is it expected to be open for service?

**VRE Management:**

Once Spotsylvania completes the acquisition of the land we will be able to more accurately project and opening date.

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**Steve from Woodbridge, VA asks:**

I continue to ask, but to no avail, why is smoking still allowed on the platform? I ride from the Rippon station and the smoking area is right in the middle of one side of the platform that people need to walk by. This is 2014 and unacceptable!

**VRE Management:**

Our smoking policy is that we allow smoking within a 100 feet of the north-end of the platform.

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**Robin from Manassas Park asks:**

How long or is VRE working on being able to provide an electronic ticket for monthly riders as opposed to the 'paper' ticket?

**VRE Management:**

We plan to kick-off our project within the next 6 months for mobile ticketing. Stay tuned for updates.

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**Joe from Woodbridge, VA asks:**

Is there any way that VRE can assist the passengers at Union Station in the afternoon/evenings with track assignment and make sure the escalators work in the correct direction for us? Here is what almost always happens: We all wait for the train to start to come in, and then we all have to funnel in to the stairs to go down, because the escalator is going up. Can you ask MARC train how they manage to assign someone to help their customers? Thanks

**VRE Management:**

We are working through issues like these with Amtrak.

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**confused from Fredericksburg, va asks:**

I have a quick question about Spotsy station and third track. Looking at the maps you have a 3rd track from the storage yard onto the CSX main line in the crossroads business park. If the Spotsy station is going to be there why do you need a third line, can't you use the one VRE uses to come out of the storage yard instead of reinventing the wheel costing ticket prices to increase?

**VRE Management:**

The 3rd Track is necessary to increase capacity on the railroad, which is used by CSX, Amtrak, as well as VRE.

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**Nandini from Manassas, Va asks:**

Hi, Sorry, my earlier post was incomplete. I wanted to bring to your notice that at Broad run station, the ticket vending machines need some servicing. They are not reading the tickets quickly and validating the tickets takes forever in the morning. Last evening I purchased a 10rides ticket and the machine failed to deliver the ticket. So I had to make a second purchase again. If the first transaction has been processed on my debit card, what is the process for refund? Thanks.

**VRE Management:**

We will have the technicians check the machines. To get a refund please contact the refund department at 703-684-1001.

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**Robin from Manassas Park asks:**

Weekend trains? Sure would be great to have service in DC on weekends, even if limited.

**VRE Management:**

Check the system plan at [http://www.vre.org/about/strategic/strategic\\_plan.htm](http://www.vre.org/about/strategic/strategic_plan.htm). There are also Amtrak trains that travel to the area from Manassas.

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**Andrew from Manassas asks:**

Can you rethink your FRC program? It's great that you take ownership and give folks a free ride when the trains are late, but for those of us with Monthly tickets, FRCs are useless. It's like a slap in the face every time the conductor hands them out to those of us who are your most loyal riders. It would be nice if they could be used to offset the price of monthly tickets as well. That way we could get some benefit from them.

**VRE Management:**

Although there is no immediate use for a monthly rider, we suggest that monthly riders keep their FRC's separate from their monthly pass for use when you forget your monthly pass. You can also save them for months you are on vacation or out of town and don't need a monthly pass. Lastly, you can give them to family or friends when they are visiting the region.

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**VRE Management:**

Sorry we were not able to respond to more of your questions. Unfortunately, we experienced technical difficulties during this forum.

If your question was not answered please submit to [gotrains@vre.org](mailto:gotrains@vre.org).

See you next Wednesday afternoon for Meet the Management at L'Enfant station.

See tracks, think trains!!!

Rich, Chris, et al.

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