

Let's Talk!

The next VRE online forum will start on Wednesday, July 2nd at 12:00pm. Click on the "ASK" Button below to submit a question.



There are currently 20 questions waiting to be answered.

VRE Management:

Welcome to another fun month of the On-Line Forum. We would like to thank everyone for their support of the Firecracker Special Trains for July, 4th. The Fredericksburg line has sold out, but we still have a few left for the Manassas Line train. Please call our office at 703-684-1001 if you wish to purchase tickets. We are looking forward to an exciting event. On to the questions!

Mindy from Spotsylvania asks:

I have noticed on the Fredericksburg line there have been a lot of slow speed between Quantico and Leeland Rd. What is the reason for the regular delays? In addition the conductors on the train (300/305) often do not announce the reason for the slow speed. Thanks and Happy 4th of July!

VRE Management:

This is the time of year where most track maintenance occurs in our service area. When the work is completed the speed restriction will be removed and we will operate at regular speeds.

bob from burke asks:

Hi. I left my phone on a morning train a couple weeks ago. I checked my "find phone" and it was showing still on the train in the Union Station yard. I called VRE and Jessica was "game on." She told me what train in the afternoon would be the return train and also took all my info in case it wasn't. Sure enough the phone was still on the seat where I left it. Thanks Jessica!!

VRE Management:

Glad we could help.

Bob from Burke asks:

The poo smell is back (at least on the Manassas Line). Most of the coaches are stinky when they pull up to the stations. A couple years ago VRE increased the chemicals and cycle of changes to mitigate the issue. Please don't ask what specific coaches have the issue. From what I can tell they all do as I ride various trains and coaches. BTW - Thank you for the excellent service. I'm not sure if I could continue to work downtown without the VRE.

VRE Management:

We will look into this issue.

Dan from Manassas, VA asks:

Thanks for the nation's best commuter rail company. Could you provide an update to the Spotsylvania Station saga? We must be getting closer? Do you think that this station will open in 2014?

VRE Management:

The track work for the new Spotsylvania station is currently underway. We were notified that Spotsylvania has acquired the land for the station and parking lot. We will release new information on expected milestones as soon as we can. Stay tuned to Train Talks and the VRE website for the most current information.

Bob from Burke asks:

I've asked before and you always say "great idea." But it never happens. Numerous times over the last three years. Fairfax County should post a phone number or email address to report maintenance/security concerns. VRE in the middle only adds to VRE's workload. The county added a jillion signs saying it was Fairfax County property and under police surveillance. But they can't put one sign near the main entrance to the platform with their info? Thanks.

VRE Management:

We can make suggestions and request but it ultimately it's up to them to make information available.

Faded... from **Manassas Park** asks:

When will the Faded parking space lines be repainted at the Manassas Park Station? They are nearly invisible especially when its dark out such as it is at 5AM when I arrive to park.

VRE Management:

We will look into this.

A Keeper from **Manassas Line** asks:

BTW kudos to VRE staff Ben and Cindy on the Manassas line they are just great people!! I look forward to seeing them daily they always brighten my day!!

VRE Management:

Thanks for the compliment.

Andrew from **Manassas VA** asks:

What is the likelihood of VRE installing WiFi on the system?

VRE Management:

Once we implement positive train control and other projects, Wi-Fi may become available.

Creighton from **Manassas VA** asks:

What is the schedule for removing the legacy Metra coaches from service?

VRE Management:

We will start replacing some of the cars later this month. Within 2 years all legacy cars will be replaced.

Sharon from **Bealeton, VA** asks:

Could you please remind folks that just because they are cued to exit the quiet car does not mean it is no longer the quiet car? It should not be the responsibility of the passengers to remind folks it is the quiet car. But the only time the conductors come into this car is when they are checking tickets so folks know that after that they can do as they please. You might as well just cut out the quiet car altogether. Thanks for letting me vent. :-)

VRE Management:

Courtesy reminder from a fellow passenger.

Graham from **Manassas Park, VA** asks:

Now that the rainy season is upon us, what date have you nailed down for the removal of the 2 walls of the old ADA cage at Manassas Park?

VRE Management:

We currently do not have a removal date, but it is on our summer project list.

Bob from **Woodville, VA** asks:

So you still anticipate that the Chicago Reject cars will be replaced soon! Crying wofle?

VRE Management:

Eight new cars will be added to the system by the end of July.

Greg from **Burke, Va.** asks:

First, Thank you for better controlling the temperature settings on the trains (i.e.,#324& #327). I have not had to wear a jacket lately. Q. Which trains will get the new Gallery cars?

VRE Management:

Judy from Burke, VA asks:

Why must the air conditioning be set so cold? It seems ridiculous that I should have to bring a sweater and a lap blanket in order to ride the train in comfort when it is 90 degrees outside. It is not one particular car or train set; it is every one I ride on, morning and evening.

VRE Management:

We will have the mechanical department check into this issue to see if the system is defective.

Bill from Fredericksburg VA asks:

Can you do something about the cars that are illegally parked along the curbs in Lot G? Because of the double parking I can not make the turn out of the lane to get out of the parking lot. I've had to cut through the parking lot along with other cars to get out. This creates a safety problem when drivers are not looking. I don't believe this is a lack of parking spots, just laziness as I've seen drivers park there for the 302 and 304 trains when lot H is wide open. Thanks.

VRE Management:

We will work with the Fredericksburg police department to have this monitored.

Harry from Manassas, VA asks:

Please remind passengers the quiet car is still the quiet car even when 1. They are standing to leave. Too many times people will have long conversations, in normal voice, when standing to leave the train. 2. When they are walking thru the quiet car. People think it's OK to talk, often loud, because they are walking thru the quiet car. Recently, I reminded a passenger "This is the quiet car.". Their loud reply, "You don't own the train." 3. People having a "whisper conversation" during their whole ride.

VRE Management:

Courtesy reminder from a fellow passenger.

Concerned from Woodbridge asks:

How often and the conductors supposed to check tickets? I think my ticket is check once every 6-8 weeks on the 300 Express. The later trains are much better. Also, there are still many people standing in the vestibule after the Alexandria stop all the way to L'Enfant. Isn't there a rule no one is supposed to stand there? It's always the same offenders. After the Woodbridge stop the conductors do walk by and do a head count but that is the last you see of them in the last car.

VRE Management:

Conductors are supposed to check tickets on each train and monitor queuing. We will look further into this.

Dave from Woodbridge, Va asks:

Good morning. Are there any rules about wearing backpacks prior to de-training? Many passengers put on their backpacks (huge groths on their back) prior to getting off the train and they turn or move and bump into others. What's sad is they never seem to say excuse me. Very rude.

VRE Management:

There are no rules about wearing back packs, but the courteous thing to do is wait until you de-board the train.

Angela from Lorton VA asks:

Is there any chance of restoring Train 304 to the original number of cars?

VRE Management:

Davin from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Thank you for making Train #306 an 8-car train. This train has been crowded and very few seats at Woodbridge. The problem is the crew doesn't know where to stop the train. It's been stopping in a different spot everyday this week. Of course, an 8-car train has to stop further up then a 7 or 6 car train.

VRE Management:

Changes are made according to the ridership. As of train 304 the car the number of cars will remain at this time. Ridership decrease in summer months, we continue to assess the ridership and if we have

to make adjustments we will. We will talk with the crew on 306 about spotting the train.

Scott from Lorton VA asks:

The trains are too noisy. Even in the regular cars, riders AND conductors should converse in quiet tones. The trains are not a bar or a party room. Please remind conductors to not only keep their own volume down, but to ask customers to also. And please no long extended loud phone calls, and please no loud shrieking and loud laughter.

VRE Management:

Courtesy reminder from a fellow passenger.

mary from Richmond, VA asks:

is there any chance that the VRE will be extend to Richmond, VA area. Thanks

VRE Management:

Not at this time.

Marc from Leeland Station asks:

Since you provided the answer to your top 10 questions in your newsletter (RIDE) this morning, maybe we could skip all the questions dealing with the top 10 on the live forum today and move on to new questions? OBTW, I do enjoy reading your publication and thank you for the taxi phone numbers. Keep up the good work.

VRE Management:

Thanks for the compliment.

Mark from Manassas Park asks:

Does the VRE has a list of priority capital projects over the next twenty-five years. The system plan gives an overview of potential projects but does not have a list in order of importance.

VRE Management:

We are currently working on prioritizing our capital projects with our partners.

Bill from Bristow asks:

I'm having a hard time picturing what the new setup will look like at Alexandria when the connecting tunnel to the Metro station is finished. Are there any diagrams or renderings that you can share with us? Also, how long is the work expected to take once it begins this Fall?

VRE Management:

We will get a diagram from our Project Manager and have it posted to the website along with a timeline.

David from Manassas asks:

This morning 326 was over 10 min late before it left Broad Run. By the time we got to Crystal City we were 18 minutes late. At no time did the conductors give us a courtesy update as at the reason. What is so hard about that?

VRE Management:

The conductors should be making announcements to update the status of delays. We will check into this.

Steve from Burke Centre asks:

Regarding folks who park in the multi level garage, is there a method to enforce the flow of traffic? Specifically on the first level, in parking area closest to the roadway, drivers insist on going the wrong way (sign designates one-way traffic) to beat the "traffic" to the exit. One day I'm sure this will cause an accident. Additionally, drivers have a 2-way stop at the garage exit, drivers routinely do not stop and become somewhat indignant if you stop and move into traffic as they roll through the stop. Thank you!

VRE Management:

Our safety and security manager will work with Fairfax County Police department to have this monitored.

Jarrold from Stafford, Va. asks:

I ride from Brooke to Alexandria 5 days a week. 98% of the time, when we arrive at Alexandria, we descend the stairway that leads under the train overpass (Track 2 I believe, the track farthest from the station). This stairway/tunnel constantly smells of human waste. I notice that there is a security gate to block off access to this stairway. Is this gate ever closed? Also, can we please implement a regular pressure washing for this stairway and the immediate area? Besides the awful smell, this situation is unsanitary and should be dealt with.

VRE Management:

We cannot close the gate because Amtrak uses this platform as well. We will look into increasing the frequency of cleaning the stairs.

Jennifer from fredericksburg va asks:

Are on boarding passangers supposed to wait until departing train passengers get off the train??

VRE Management:

As a courtesy, yes.

Robin from Manassas Park asks:

Could we have better 'Quiet Car' signage? Especially in the seats closest to the vestibule, where most guests sit...and chat loudly.

VRE Management:

We will ensure there is adequate signage. We will ask the conductors to monitor this issue.

Richard from Richardsville VA asks:

Some sections of rail have concrete ties. I assume it is a test program. How is it progressing?

VRE Management:

This is no test. This is a proven application.

Molly from Lorton, VA asks:

Metro plans to stop using paper tickets and would get rid of paper ticket entrance gates by end of 2015. Does VRE plan to discontinue the TLC monthly tickets?

VRE Management:

There are no immediate plans to discontinue the TLC. We will work with WMATA to come up with alternatives if and when they do choose to discontinue it.

Robin from Manassas Park asks:

Manassas Park parking needs more traffic calming mechanisms installed - first to get the car commuters to SLOW DOWN and also to prevent the parking lots from being used as drag strips on the weekends. (The street rockets have returned in Manassas Park.)

VRE Management:

Our safety and security manager will work Prince William County Police Department to have this monitored.

Billy from Alexandria VA asks:

Again this morning the automated voice and the information screen at Alexandria said the next arriving train would be on the track furthest from the station. We all ran down the stairs through the tunnel and up the stairs to the other side. The next train #328 then came around the bend but was on the track closest to the station, where it should be, we all dashed back down the steps, through the tunnel and up the steps. By the time we arrived the train was already stopped and mostly unloaded. Can this system be turned off?

VRE Management:

We apologize for the mix-up. We will check the messages to make sure they are accurate.

Jim from Woodbridge VA asks:

Can you tell us the status of the Potomac Shores station and when you think completion is likely?

VRE Management:

The Potomac Shores station is progressing in the planning stage, however there is no estimated time

for completion.

Mark from Bristow, VA asks:

I noticed this morning that the RIDE magazine was not distributed to all the seats in the my car this morning, and that's a good thing! I would prefer to see the magazine online, but was unable to since the "latest issue" is still May 2014. Would it be possible to post the electronic version to coincide with the hardcopy for those of us in the digital age? Thx

VRE Management:

There is an electronic version of the Ride Magazine. If you visit our website at <http://www.vre.org/service/seatnote.htm> you will find a link to the already published magazines.

Frank from Fredericksburg asks:

Understanding there will be CSX freight traffic to contend with and there will likely be delays to the schedule... is anything else preventing any sort of VRE weekend rail service from Freddy-burg into Union Station?

VRE Management:

We are not looking at weekend service at this time.

Kimmarie from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

I had heard that VRE service will be extended to Spotsylvania. Is there any truth to this and if so, when will this extension be finalized and will it be in the same zone as Fredericksburg or a zone 10?

VRE Management:

Yes, we will extend to Spotsylvania and it will be zone 9.

Debbie from Broad Run, VA asks:

For years now your passengers have been asking VRE the status of the Gainesville/Haymarket Station and for years we keep getting the same answer that studies are being conducted and yet on the Fredericksburg line I hear about stations moving forward towards completion with no mention ever of studies having to be completed. I thinking you have studied hard enough, now its time to take the exam and move forward with the new stations. So what is the real answer regarding the Gainesville/Haymarket stations? Please stop putting everyone off with the studies comment.

VRE Management:

The Gainesville/Haymarket station is in our System Plan. However, that project will not be completed in the near future.

Debbie from VA asks:

The posters have been up, but apparently no one pays attention to them when it comes to the personal grooming on the train. Quite often, I see ladies whip out their mirrors and start with the powder, mascara, shadow and lipstick. I know sometimes the conductors are walking thru and they may just miss it, but maybe once a train gets underway from a station they could make an announcement not to do your personal grooming on the train.

VRE Management:

Courtesy reminder.

Sandy from Fredericksburg asks:

Good morning. The mosquitos and gnats are taking over the cars on the train. Is there something that can be done? I spent most of my trip swatting them away. How do they end up inside the cars?

VRE Management:

We will look into this specific issue. But in general this is the time of year we are combating bug infestation.

Bob from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Please check the speakers at the Woodbridge station. There is often an echo making the announcements difficult to understand.

VRE Management:

We will have our technicians look into this.

Deb from Fredericksburg,va asks:

When riding trains, the conductors radios are blasting extremely loud usually in our ears as they walk by, or standing over us checking tickets or just standing in car. Some attempt to turn down a little after blasts come through. Question: can't the conductors wear an ear piece like cops and other officials with radios /phones being monitored ? The ear piece does not inhibit hearing either radio or surrounding areas.

VRE Management:

The conductors must have their radios on at all times and at a volume they can clearly understand what is happening on the rails to ensure everyone's safety. Some conductors do wear ear pieces but that is a personal preference, not mandated.

robert from potomac shores asks:

when a train runs with 2 locomotives - either 2 together or one on each end - do they both provide power to propell the train, or is one in "idle" mode?

VRE Management:

One is in idle mode.

Deb from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

Can Train ticket rules need to be posted clearly at VRE stations so that: 1. People using step ups know single rides don't qualify for step ups on Amtrak (Daily- first time riders have no idea not printed clearly)? 2. Put posted signs higher so that the always crowded stations, platforms aren't hiding necessary postings?

VRE Management:

There are signs posted on the ticket vending machines explaining the use of the step up tickets. On our website under service information there is a link to our New Rider's Guide. This informs our passengers on what they need to know as a first-time VRE rider.

frances from fredericksburg/quantico asks:

why do you NOT do 'meet the management' at all stops? i enjoy meeting with VRE staff and asking questions and finding information about things that i do not find otherwise. i have heard others wonder why the program was changed, and that it makes it feel like we who are leftout feel like we do not count. please bring meet the management to all stations as before, there are LOTS of new riders who would like to experience this instead of hearing about it as a past experience of us long time riders.

VRE Management:

We are planning some events for this summer at mid-line destination stations, like Lorton and Quantico to accommodate those passengers who do not travel into the city.

Keith from Pearisburg, VA asks:

Why does VRS print out so many copies of its monthly publication? At best only half of them are read, and even then for just a few minutes. Seems like you could reduce the number by half easily. People who are interested in reading them could share them with their neighboring passenger.

VRE Management:

It is available to all passengers whether they read them or not. Some passengers look for the publication and like to take it with them. We will evaluate the number of copies printed.

Deb from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

HP seats, are somewhat marked but should hold fine (Well posted)for not rendering seat to obvious handicapped person(s) Getting a conductor to claim a HP seat could take a very long time, if conductor isn't near. Plus causes embarrassment to HP person. Like HP parking perhaps it should be restricted to VRE HP card holders?

VRE Management:

VRE follows federal regulations for all ADA passengers.

Mark from Fredericksburg asks:

Fburg station generally stinks of urine and homeless people not taking trains seem a bit dangerous. Can VRE resolve the invasion ?

VRE Management:

We will work with the City of Fredericksburg

Feeling Forgotten from Manassas VA asks:

At the last Union Station Meet the Management a couple of months ago, I talked with the Amtrak manager about the frequently turned off escalators, and the inability to get Amtrak personnel to turn them on. As the Amtrak manager acknowledged, lots of us have computer bags and luggage, and we deserve working escalators. He said Amtrak would have a customer service agent, starting in May, in the gate area every evening, and he would personally see to it the escalator situation was fixed. The customer service person has not shown up and escalators are often turned off. What gives?

VRE Management:

We will work with Amtrak to try to have this resolved.

Rod from Fairfax VA asks:

Can you brief us on your plans to expand the service on the Frederickburg line south? I know someone that lives in Mechanicsville, VA who would like a better way of commuting into DC.

VRE Management:

As of now, our system plan only goes as far south as Spotsylvania. At this time there are no plans to provide service beyond this point.

JB from Manassas, VA asks:

Train #326 has been consistently off schedule lately, at Manassas Park. 6:26 AM is the schedule. It has been running 5-6 Min late for the last week or so, which makes the arrival at LEFant late too.

VRE Management:

S from Burke, VA asks:

I ride Manassas northbound train #330 in the mornings from Burke Centre to Alexandria. It has generally been a great, reliable experience but in the last two weeks it has been arriving late into Alexandria almost every day. It is supposed to arrive at 8:08 according to the schedule and instead it is usually closer to 8:15 (8:14 today). This has caused me to miss my connecting DASH bus at 8:15 and arrive late to work. Why is #330 now delayed on a regular basis? Has the schedule changed? An on-train announcement explaining the delay would be appreciated. Thank you.

VRE Management:

There is track maintenance being performed in the Manassas area slowing some of the trains down. Until completed you can expect 5-10 minute delays due to this issue.

Cindy from Fredericksburg asks:

When do you anticipate the elevator at Fredericksburg to be back in service? The ramp is extremely steep for handicap folks like myself.

VRE Management:

At this time the contractor for the City of Fredericksburg is still working to resolve the issue.

Mac from Lorton, VA asks:

There seems to be an increase in delays lately. When the VRE is late getting in to L'Enfant, this makes me late for work thus I have to stay late to make up the time. I thought CSX and Amtrak weren't allowed to use the same tracks when VRE uses them. Am I wrong? Also, there is a man who always plays loud music on the train; 7:15 F-burg line. The conductors walk by and don't say anything. This is a disruption to others not to mention inconsiderate and rude towards other passengers. Can something be done about this? This man either needs to purchase headphones or turn it off!

VRE Management:

There is track maintenance being performed on the CSX territory as well.

Stanley from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

I take the 303 to Leeland Station where I get off. A month or so ago, the first and last cars on the train did not make the station platform, but that changed and now the last two cars do not make the platform. I noticed people are coming off the last three cars while the first car has detrained completely. It takes a few minutes longer to detrain at Leeland with the last two trains not making the platform. It seems it would be more efficient to go back to the first and last trains not making the platform.

VRE Management:

We added a car to train 303 making it 8 cars. The platform at Leeland Road can only accommodate 5 cars.

Mark from Burke asks:

Do you intend to reconvene the passenger advisory committee at some point? I thought it was an effective way for passengers to share with VRE the thoughts and concerns of their fellow passengers.

VRE Management:

Not at this time.

Soon to be non-train commuter from Fredericksburg asks:

I am about to stop riding the train for work, and it's been fun (mostly). I just wanted to make a point to the individual who was worried about catching strep from the guy on the 6th St side of L'Enfant Plaza - you will catch more from your fellow riders who cough and sneeze with abandon, than you will from that man. And to all the others who complain about it, how about we show some human decency and compassion for another human being?

VRE Management:

Thank you for riding VRE!

K from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

Please add to the ridership reminders: Please don't snip your fingernails on the train, especially you people sitting in the upper level. We below hear it and cringe, thinking your cast-offs are landing in our hair, clothes, beverages, etc. Don't pick and flick anything else, either!

VRE Management:

Gross! Thanks!

S from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

Please remind riders that gum popping is rude, annoying, and gross, like some form of crass torture you devised against your fellow riders. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8QCcmqaEMPI> or <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SP4drPLkGYY>

VRE Management:

Courtesy reminder. We will check out the video.

Jon from Woodbridge, VA asks:

A Chevy SUV has been parked in the Woodbridge garage for well over a month now hogging a spot (#301) where an other sedan usually parks in the morning. As a result, I've had to park further up then in my normal spot. Please check it and see if needs to be removed.

VRE Management:

We will look to see if the SUV has been parked there too long.

P from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

Public Service Announcement: Please leave your smoking jacket in your car, or bring a plastic bag to put it in on the train. It's bad enough that the smell lingers in your hair, face and hands, but must you bring a marinated stink blanket, too?

VRE Management:

Courtesy reminder.

Tim from Rippon, VA asks:

VRE is slow to update their website lately. The consist page needs to be updated and so does the Daily Download.

VRE Management:

We will update this page.

Tina from **Manassas Park, Va** asks:

When will VRE start running late trains like the MARC in Maryland? 655pm for the last train out is just not late enough for those who work late.

VRE Management:

We have no plans at this time.

Stevie Wonders from **Falmouth** asks:

The sounds of silence are becoming deafening for station announcements. Half the time there are not any announcements for the station stops, or the volume is so low you can't hear them. Making matters worse is the station announcement that is timed for when the doors are getting ready to close. How are announcements timed? Is this a manual process? It doesn't help that the station identification signs are so poorly placed. And, screw wifi. I just want reliable cellphone reception from Woodbridge to Leeland. I called AT&T about the lack of coverage.

VRE Management:

If you notice any problems with the PA system please send the information to gotrains@vre.org.

David from **Spotsy, Va** asks:

Hi - I normally travel between Fred and Alexandria (2-9). The other day, I attended a conference in DC and I purchased a single ride ticket to cover my ride from L'Enfant to Alexandria. However, I couldn't validate my 10-trip zones 2-9 ticket at L'Enfant. I told the conductor and he let me validate my 10 trip at Fred. Is there an easier way of doing this? Thanks.

VRE Management:

There is no other way of obtaining a ticket. However, when mobile ticketing comes on-line it will be easier.

Michael from **Washington, DC** asks:

Would you please consider installing a TVM at the handicap ramp entrance at L'Enfant Plaza? Those who use 10-trip tickets must walk half the length of an always crowded platform to validate tickets. It is dangerous especially near train time. Other stations have TVMs in multiple locations and L'Enfant needs one badly.

VRE Management:

Unfortunately, that area of the platform is very crowded, but when mobile ticketing comes on-line you can have a TVM in your pocket.

John from **Stafford, VA** asks:

Occasionally TSA officers ride in the vestibules and walk through the trains on the Fredericksburg Line. Their paramilitary appearance and demeanor make me feel less secure. VRE should advise riders on the authority these personnel have pertaining to passengers. Are they expected/authorized to search passengers and passenger belongings? I would likely not comply with a random search.

VRE Management:

To improve the safety and security of our system, they are there to observe our operations and will not conduct random searches.

VRE Management:

Thanks again for all the great questions! If we missed yours please forward it to gotrains@vre.org. Please enjoy your 4th of July holiday weekend. Please remember our founding fathers sacrificed life and limb to carve a new and free nation out of the wilderness. Don't sacrifice your life or limb for something much less admirable such as taking unnecessary risk with fireworks or driving under the influence.

Stay Safe!

See Tracks? Think Train!!!

See you in August!

Rich, Chris, et al. and special guest Joe Lisska from CSX in Jacksonville, FL.