

Let's Talk!

The next VRE online forum will start on Wednesday, March 5th at 12:00pm.



There are currently 34 questions waiting to be answered.

VRE Management:

It's has been an active winter and some of you may wonder why we cancel service in heavy snow fall. Contrary to popular belief, VRE does not operate service based on decisions from the Federal Government. There are other factors that present major problems in winter conditions. These include switches freezing up or the inability of personnel trying to reach the trains in emergency situations. Safety is our major concern and heavily influences our decision to operate or not operate service. Now on to the questions!!

Marsh from Manassas asks:

I was on train 322 the morning the young man was struck. I would like to say that from the moment I heard that horn start to blow and the breaks being applied that your crew stepped up and acted in the most professional and finely tuned manner. They went into their emergency mode and took care of what needed to be done. They also did a fantastic job of keeping us passengers informed. How horrible they must feel over this so I just want to say to the entire crew that they are in my thoughts and prayers as is the family of the boy.

VRE Management:

While an unfortunate event, we are glad to know that our crews are handling situations such as this in a professional manner. Part of our safety campaign this year will focus on safety at crossings and around railroad tracks. It is always good to receive positive feedback about our crews.

Brenda from Leeland Station asks:

Last month I asked the question below and was wondering if you got the answer: "On the northbound tracks between Quantico and Rippon, there is an area that seems to rock the train to the point it throws people around. It seems to be getting worse because now there is a hard hit and banging noise that feels like the train could derail. This incident is making a lot of people nervous, especially because they don't know what causes this. Can someone please explain what this is so our minds can be at ease. Thanks!"

VRE Management:

We forwarded the information over to CSX to review. They contacted their Division Structural Engineer for further evaluations.

from asks:

from cap hghts to union station from union station to Fredericksburg cost and times please

VRE Management:

According to the WMATA travel planner (www.wmata.com) the cost to ride Metro from Capitol Heights to Union Station is \$3.05. VRE only operates service from Union Station to Fredericksburg in the evening, that cost is \$11.10. For a detailed list of train times please visit us at <http://www.vre.org/service/schedule.htm>.

Dan from Manassas, VA asks:

VRE is US's best commuter rail service. After 30 yrs, MARC has Sat-Sun runs. Why not have a "Demonstration Weekend" to measure public support for FRED Line? An Oklahoma RR tried similar tests. All 6 trains sold out. Can VRE seek funds for test runs?

VRE Management:

Dan thanks for the compliment. Check out our system plan as it addresses potential weekend and non-peak service. http://www.vre.org/about/strategic/strategic_plan.htm

Larry from Falmouth, Va. asks:

When can we get the yahoos who park illegally in the no parking area leading from the paved to the unpaved lot at Leeland Station towed? It was an extremely dangerous situation when traffic was squeezed to one lane because of illegally parking and the snow. Numerous complaints have been filed with Stafford County. These lazy clowns can park up in the lot like everyone else.

VRE Management:

We will forward the information to Stafford County Sheriff's Department to address.

Dick from Manassas asks:

More Amtrak trains that accept VRE step-up tickets and that stop in Quantico should also stop at Woodbridge. The Woodbridge Station has far more population than Quantico. Perhaps some train slots at Quantico should be given to Woodbridge due to ease of access to Woodbridge and the population difference. Please comment.

VRE Management:

We are in discussion with Amtrak about additional step-up trains and we will have discussion with them about the Woodbridge Station stop.

Ray from Spotsy asks:

What is the status of the new station? I thought it was supposed to be open by now.

VRE Management:

Spotsylvania County is still in the process of finalizing the land acquisition for the station and parking lot. Once this occurs, we can provide an accurate timeline of the opening of the new station.

RJ from Fredericksburg asks:

Train 300 seems to have different rules related to standing in the vestibules depending on the car. The front 3 cars no one stands in the vestibule, but the last 2 have people standing in them all the time even when plenty of seats are available. I thought this was a safety issue.

VRE Management:

You are correct, this is a safety issue and we do not want people standing in the vestibules. We will work with the train crew to ensure that this is enforced.

R from Manassas Park asks:

I'd like to address the opposite type of queuing- when we're waiting for the train to arrive and board in the morning. I know many like to have the doors open right in front of them, and some make a game of it, but the other morning when I was finally the "lucky spot" someone pushed past me to be the first on board! I don't mind not being first, but the platform was still slick, and this could lead to accidents. I've had someone tell me they've slipped under the train that way. So be careful- you could be first on, and you could cause serious injury pushing to the front!

VRE Management:

Safety reminder from a fellow passenger.

Corbett from Fredericksburg, va asks:

Referring to the building of the new Spotsylvania station, will #1 track between Mine Rd & Crossroads be elevated to the other tracks, or stay at the level of Benchmark Rd?

VRE Management:

It will be raised from Mine Road to where the station is so that all three main lines will be at the same grade.

Bill from Manassas, VA asks:

What is the VRE policy on e-Tobacco?

VRE Management:

VRE has the same policy for e-tobacco as it does for regular tobacco usage

woody from fredericksburg asks:

tired of standing up. what are u doing about seating on the trains.

VRE Management:

We have plans in place to add another train to the Fredericksburg line within the next year.

Dave from Woodbridge VA asks:

Does VRE actually collaborate with the government (OPM) on weather delays or shutdowns? It appears to me that VRE does not. My reason for that statement is that OPM puts out their announcement and then VRE theirs. In one case OPM was going to stay open and VRE put out that they will run full service. When OPM changed their tune then VRE did so later.

VRE Management:

While it influences our decision, it is not the sole determining factor. For example, we have operated an "S" schedule even though OPM closed the Federal Government.

Tim from FBG VA asks:

I've inquired about this before...L'Enfant Plaza platform towards the 6th St end...the windscreen was installed directly in front of the bench and it makes for difficult navigation thru a very narrow aisle for people...not to mention passengers in wheelchairs who cannot go around this to the front of the platform because of the "Gotta Get On First" herd of people crowding that area. Before we talk about wifi or other conveniences please look in to fixing this situation. Thanks.

VRE Management:

We agree we will plan to advance a project that, at a minimum, adds some depth to the existing platform

Linda from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

If DC was evacuated due to weather or something else what would VRE do if this occurred in between morning and evening schedules? Keep to the regular schedules? Or???

VRE Management:

We have very limited flexibility to change our schedule for weather related events. However, in the event of other types of emergencies we will work with our host railroads to operate as needed.

Joe from Spotsy asks:

Why was the decision to suspend service on Monday made so early. At 4 in the morning on Monday it was raining and 36 degrees. Why wasn't an "S" schedule used and why wasn't the decision to suspend operations reversed to an "S" schedule.

VRE Management:

For the safety of our passengers the decision was made Sunday night. We try to make these decisions as soon as possible so the people who still work can plan accordingly. The weather threat was more focused on an afternoon service window and our concern was for the safety of the passengers as we would bring them home. We worked with regional authorities to minimize traffic on the roads including to and from our stations.

JW from Fredericksburg asks:

Can you please ask the City of Fred to repaint lines on the gravel lot on Sophia St? Parking is ridiculous with all the construction vehicles parking all over the lot. I've see cars triple parked due to no lines being visible -- and then have city police actually check the lot for permits.

VRE Management:

We will contact to city to see if they can get this done

Bo White from Fred asks:

We really need crosswalk signals crossing Laffayette Blvd at the Fredericksburg station...the one place where several hundred people cross the street everyday in Fred and no cross signals?! If I remember right, wasn't someone hit by a car there a few years back crossing to catch a train? Please discuss with Fred officials. Thanks.

VRE Management:

We will forward to Fredericksburg.

John from Stafford asks:

VRE should designate a LOUD CAR. I normally ride 309 in the evenings and if I close my eyes I'd swear I was back on the middle school afternoon activities bus. There is a gaggle of individuals who

all seem to wanna talk all at once and talk over each other...Yes, I probably should hoof it to the Quiet Car, but I don't want to sit in church on my way home either. I can clearly hear this crowd even when I crank up my earphones...Just Sayin' folks tone it down a little!

VRE Management:

Courtesy reminder from a fellow rider.

John from Clifton, VA asks:

Many commuters use time on the train to catch up on work or personal business that requires internet connectivity and their laptops. Can VRE Trains be outfitted with WIFI so this work/business activity can be accomodated and made easier for riders?

VRE Management:

We are continuing to work on getting Wi-Fi. As we stated before, we have a lot of dead spots and certainly we need the funding to do this.

Michael from Bristow Virginia asks:

Is the parking lot at broad run going to be expanded? Should cars that are taking up two parking spaces be fined? Or towed?

VRE Management:

We have plans to work with the County to add a parking garage.

Doug from Burke, VA asks:

Wow, what a cold and snowy winter. VRE did a great job of keeping the sidewalks and parking lots cleared, and the train running. What were the biggest challenges, and how did you address them? Thanks so much for the great service. Doug

VRE Management:

Thanks for the compliment. It takes coordination with a lot of different agencies during these types of weather conditions.

Tom from Stafford, VA asks:

Last month there was a question asked about the tracks between Quantico and Rippon where "there is an area (on the bridge) that seems to rock the train to the point it throws people around. This incident is making a lot of people nervous." The answer was "Area track structure is routinely inspected and addressed immediately if needed. This may be more of a ride quality issue and we will work with CSX to improve." Well, this morning the rocking and rolling was so bad the doors between the cars flung open. Being over water makes it scarier. It seems to be more than a ride quality issue.

VRE Management:

Answered previously

Don from Bristow asks:

Broad Run parking lot is a mess, guys. Someone needs to take control of the wrong-way drivers. The lane arrows are there to make traffic flow and are routinely ignored. We "suckers" who know how to wait our turn always let you cheaters merge into our lane, but shame on you. And that long crosswalk has been taken over by drivers waiting to pick up people, so you have to walk in the traffic lanes to get to your car. How about one or two county police, on foot, with their ticket books out and issuing citations? Use some of your pull, VRE, to help us out.

VRE Management:

Our Manager of Safety and Security is aware and is working with Prince William County to get this resolved.

Big D from Woodbridge, Va asks:

People are still using the right hand lane to cross rt. 1 to Occoquan Road before 5pm. This is illegal and there have been many close accidents because of it. Please contact Prince William County Police to monitor these people who do not follow the law.

VRE Management:

We will forward this to our Safety and Security Manager.

George from Fredericksburg Va asks:

Will VRE consider "black topping" the overfill parking lot at Leeland Road station. Current conditions of the overfill (upper) parking lot is causing multiple damages to cars from gravel being propelled onto automobiles from passing cars and the extensive amount of pot-holes.

VRE Management:

Stafford County leases this lot from a developer and we will pass your suggestion along to them.

Dave from Fred Line asks:

I was on the Fredricksburg train heading south about 3 weeks back and one of the conductors made an announcement that there will be additional service added in the fall for the Fredricksburg line. He mentioned there would be another early train and this train would head south sometime between 1pm-330pm. Just curious, would this train possibly leave Union Station about 2pm or even 230pm? This is welcomed news.

VRE Management:

We are still in the planning phase. It is our plan to add another train to the Fredericksburg, however departure times have not been finalized.

robert from dumfries asks:

2 things, would you update the Capitol Projects page - it still shows Springfield construction in progress - and what info is there about the Potomac Shores station? The sales folks say it will be in 2017. it there additional trackwork that also has to be done?

VRE Management:

We will update the Capitol Projects page. Once we advance the planning process for Potomac Shores we will update our website.

David from Manassas asks:

One day last week Manassas train 326 was running ontime. We arrived at Alexandria at the same time as a late running Fredericksburg train. Instead of allowing 326 to continue on time to Crystal City, the Fredericksburg train moved first, causing 326 to now be late...Just doesn't make sense why you would opt to make 2 trains worth of commuters late, instead of extending the late train just a bit longer?

VRE Management:

Because Fredericksburg was scheduled to depart first, the CSX dispatcher aligned the signals to make that happen.

Robert from Woodbridge asks:

VRE has indicated there may be schedule changes and or possible a new train or two. If this is true, when should we expect to see more information.

VRE Management:

We do have plans to add additional trains but at this time we do not have specifics.

Kevin from Burke Centre asks:

Why no policy or even a courtesy mention for people not wear their backpacks when loading/unloading?? Many are huge & unwieldy & cause 1 person to take the space of 2 in aisles. I witnessed what almost turned into a fist fight over a 'blow' from one. PLEASE ADD IT! Also, PLEASE have the conductors enforce the rule of not queuing in the aisles before you have even departed the prior station. Happens EVERY evening a Rolling Rd. No enforcement NO RULE!! People are SO inconsiderate! You gotta manage this! PLEASE.

VRE Management:

Courtesy reminder from a fellow rider.

David from Manassas asks:

While your emails about winter weather decision making and that your monitoring the conditions and consulting the other railroad companies sound very buisness like, the reality is that once OPM closes, you close very soon after! Understand the fed govt is your #1 provider of customers, so why not just say that from the get go instead of the "consulting our partners in rail"??? Has VRE ever run when the Fed Govt is closed?

VRE Management:

As recently as December 10th, we ran an "S" schedule even when OPM closed the government.

Becky from Nokesville asks:

Won't you at least consider cutting down on the amount (and volume) of announcements on the trains? Between the general information announcements, the conductors' advising which cars' won't make the platform (some of them REALLY like the sound of their own voices), and the courtesy reminders with the "funny" voice, it's become impossible to doze or enjoy my audio books even with earbuds. Your decisionmakers need to ride the trains every day (especially early in the a.m.) and we'll see how much of that racket they think is really necessary.

VRE Management:

We know announcements aren't useful to the veteran rider however, there are new riders that ride our service everyday who may find these announcements useful.

Dave from Gainesville VA asks:

I don't know how much control VRE has over plowing parking lots. But I just want to say thanks this time for a better plowing job. During last storm few weeks ago, dozens of spaces were under snow for days or even a few weeks.

VRE Management:

Since VRE parking lots are owned by different jurisdictions and private owners the responsibility for snow removal is different for each station. It is a challenge to work through the multiple parties and thank you for recognizing the effort.

dave from manassas asks:

VRE used to take pride in operating under adverse conditions. People used to take pride in going to work. Are we now trending towards "Circle the wagons" mentality? Why the complete shutdown on Monday? VRE has spent millions on CSXT (and NS) infrastructure, including switch heaters. Five inches of snow stops the VRE cold. SHAME! Who shut the railroad down on Monday?????

VRE Management:

The primary driver for Monday's decision was an effort region wide to keep drivers off the road including to and from our stations.

Marc from F--burg asks:

More passengers detrain at King, C.C., and L'Enfant than Union so intermediate station times count as much as the final destination. Train #326 cannot keep their intermediate schedule at King and Crystal City but could if it departed Broad Run 5 minutes earlier and this would still put it 8 minutes after #304 at AF.

VRE Management:

It is standard industry practice to track on time performance based on the arrival to the last station. However, we will keep your suggestion in mind when evaluating the on-time performance of our trains.

Kevin from Manassas, VA asks:

The last time VRE had to cancel all morning trains I was able to ride the Amtrak train (19?) that departs Manassas around 830 (it was late that day and departed more like 9 AM). This was much more convenient than driving to Metro or waiting for the 10 AM Amtrak, which VRE riders are allowed to ride any day with a step up ticket. Could VRE consider making the earlier Amtrak available to VRE riders with a step up ticket on days when Train 332 is cancelled?

VRE Management:

We are working with Amtrak to add additional step-up trains in the service area.

Andrew from Manassas asks:

VRE, you are not Amtrak. Please stop sending out amtrak updates every day about the 12:00 train being delayed an hour. I appreciate that some VRE riders will, from time to time, ride the amtrak. But if they want amtrak updates they should subscribe to amtrak's alerts. Furthermore, the updates you send out are normally late and uninformative if they are sent out at all. The VRE's communication, as of late, has been lacking at best, but, hey, at least we know the Amtrak is running late...

VRE Management:

We do this as a courtesy to our daily 400-500 passengers who take advantage of the Amtrak step-up trains. You can opt out of the Amtrak alerts.

Richard from Nokesville asks:

I look forward to the online forum every month and I've noticed that you never get through all the questions. Why not make it 2 hours long, or at least go back later and answer all the questions for the archive? Keeping the riders informed about the day to day issues is the most important thing you guys do on your website. Hope you'll consider this.

VRE Management:

We are working for a solution to get through all the questions.

Robert from Woodbridge asks:

Every morning (unless the conductor is an extra board), the conductor and a passenger open the vestibule doors in the cab car (Train 310) and carry on a conversation from Crystal City to LeFant with the cold air coming into the point that it can be felt at the back of the car. Is there anything way that this practice can be discontinued at least until the weather warms up? If they need to HAVE a conversation, can't the conductor either step in to the car or the passenger step out into the vestibule?

VRE Management:

Thank you for pointing this out. We will address this with the crew.

Frank from Fredericksburg asks:

Could VRE work with CSX & AMTRAK share the expense and to install a 4' high, chain link fence between the tracks at Fredericksburg Station to prevent passengers from crossing the tracks. More & more folks simply walk across the tracks when an announcement alerts of a change of arrival track.

VRE Management:

As a safety reminder to our passengers do not cross the tracks.

Richard from Quantico, VA asks:

I've noticed a lot more train traffic on the Fredericksburg line lately and as a result there have been a variety of problems that causes "people hauling" trains such as VRE and Amtrak to be delayed, sometimes for long periods of time. The DC train corridor is one of the most congested and is projected to get even busier within the next several years. Is VRE developing any kind of plan to address this problem that could very well into question the practicality and viability of VRE as a reliable commuting option?

VRE Management:

Take a look at our system plan http://www.vre.org/about/strategic/strategic_plan.htm. We do have an OTP of over 95%.

Michele from Woodbridge, VA asks:

If you validate a FRC or one-ride ticket in the morning and do not use it, is it still good for the afternoon ride on the same day?

VRE Management:

Once you validate a ticket, you have an hour to use that ticket.

Jessica from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

Can you please explain why there are no plans to build a multi-level garage in place of the current unpaved commuter lot for the Fredericksburg VRE station? There is consistently a lack of parking for the Fredericksburg area and the current lot's state is dismal and potentially unsafe for cars. It seems that Fredericksburg's parking situation could be easily resolved by building a multi-level garage in place of the current unpaved lot.

VRE Management:

The city of Fredericksburg built a parking garage on Sophia Street and do have plans to build another in the area.

Scott from Burke, VA asks:

Because the transit subsidy for federal employees was cut and I happen to be working at home more, it does not make sense for me to purchase a monthly ticket. The 5-day ticket also does not work with my schedule. While I like the 10-trip ticket option, I have decided to take the Metrobus because I constantly am afraid that I will forget to validate the ten-trip ticket and receive a summons. Commuter trains in the New York City area have the conductors physically clip tickets for each day used. Why

does VRE put the burden of validating the 10-trip ticket on the customer?

VRE Management:

We have a different fare collection system. Visual inspection is much faster, we do not have a dedicated fare inspections staff and mobile ticketing will make the ticketing process much easier.

Matt from **Woodbridge, VA** asks:

Can VRE trains operate in the snow? Isn't that why locomotives have snow plows on them.

VRE Management:

Yes they can.

Stephen from **Lorton, VA** asks:

Almost everyday, Train #306 is delayed into Crystal City by a Manassas Train. Can VRE do something about it, such as re-scheduling the Manassas train so it doesn't get in the way of Fredericksburg Train

VRE Management:

All current trains schedules are under review and can be implemented as early as fall.

Tom from **Springfield, VA** asks:

Is Postive Train Control like the Automatic Train Control subway trains use?

VRE Management:

No, it is more of a safety overlay system.

Anon from **VA** asks:

Hi, is it customary for the conductors to ask to see your ticket BEFORE you get on the train (while we are still on the platform)?

VRE Management:

No, Conductors should not check tickets prior to boarding. Validated tickets are only required onboard the trains.

dave from **manassas** asks:

what mechanical issue forced cancellation of 324 yesterday?

VRE Management:

It did not pass pre-departure checks. The issues were subsequently resolved and the train set operated today.

AI from **Rippon, VA** asks:

How often do crew change the train they work on?

VRE Management:

Once a month the train crews can bid different jobs.

VRE Management:

Thank you for spending your noon hour with us. Your questions were AWESOME!!!
Please keep in mind that clocks spring forward this weekend. We hope this means warmer weather is right around the corner.
See you next month, Rich, Chris, et al.