

Let's Talk!

The next VRE online forum will start on Wednesday, September 3rd at 12:00pm. Click on the "ASK" Button below to submit a question.



There are currently 13 questions waiting to be answered.

VRE Management:

Welcome to the monthly On-Line forum. Summer is unofficially over and we know there are new riders trying out our service. This is one of the many avenues of communication we have for our riders. Feel free to ask any service - related question here or email (gotrains@vre.org), Twitter, and Facebook. To our veterans riders we hope you enjoyed your summer. Now on to the questions!

David from Gainesville VA asks:

Quiet Car very popular. It's filled up at Broad Run and hard for people to get seats at other stops. Could you add another quiet car? Some people talk really loud on their cellphones and electronic devices are pretty noisy. Maybe do a survey first.

VRE Management:

We don't have plans to add another quiet car to the trains at this time.

Eva from Lorton asks:

Could you please have the lights in the Lorton Parking lot checked? There are several that are not working properly. Now that it is dark in the morning, it is important that the lights work properly. Thank you.

VRE Management:

We will have our facilities manager check into this.

Jeannette from Spotsylvania, VA asks:

When will the Spotsy station open. I rode VRE for the first time this morning in Fredericksburg. I had to park really far from the station and had to walk a great distance. During the walk I was approached by a very shady man asking for "smokes". It was pretty frightening! I did not see any security or police patrolling the area.

VRE Management:

The station is projected to open Summer 2015, contingent on Spotsylvania County's completion of the parking lot. The City of Fredericksburg does randomly patrol that lot. We will also inform our Manager of Safety and Security.

JoAnn from Nokesville asks:

I'd like to comment on some of the conductors' behavior. I spend at least two hours of every workday trapped in a train car with them, so I feel entitled to offer some criticism. There are a few of the men who need to dial it down a few notches. You talk too much, too loudly, move around the cars too much, and generally make a nuisance of yourselves. Flirting and showing off presents anything but a professional appearance. And I'm astounded at the guy on 327 who can't pass any of the microphones without having to make an announcement. Regular riders will know who I mean.

VRE Management:

We do appreciate feedback on our conductor's behaviors whether negative or positive. We will work with the conductor's supervisors on this issue.

William from King George, VA asks:

When will the Legacy cars on 310 & 312 be replaced with the new Gallery cars

VRE Management:

All Legacy Cars should be replaced by the end of 2016.

Dave from Manassas asks:

What is VRE's average fuel usage per TRAIN MILE (gal/mile), and what is the current price per gallon?

VRE Management:

The average for all VRE trains is approximately 4 gallons per mile. The fuel price fluctuates between \$3.25- \$3.50 per gallon.

George from Manassas VA asks:

Please tell me why the trains, especially in the am, are FREEZING COLD at 0615. I've mentioned it a couple of times and the conductors just shrug. Inquiries on twitter bring no response either.

VRE Management:

The temperatures are automatically controlled. If you have a specific train number you can report it to gotrains@vre.org.

A. S. from Manassas asks:

The "poo-poo choo-choo" problem has mostly abated, and the stink from the on-board toilets has been almost suppressed. Thank you, but why did it take so long to adjust the chemicals in the tanks? we were complaining about this for most of the summer, and it's not a new problem that just started this year. Another reason why you guys in management really need to ride your trains and see what we deal with.

VRE Management:

Management rides the trains and is aware there has been a problem. We are constantly working towards improving all levels of our service.

JP from Stafford asks:

When the future sites are finished (Massaponax and Potomac Shores) will that change the express train stops?

VRE Management:

We plan to stop at the Spotsylvania station but don't anticipate any other changes.

Dan from Burke, VA asks:

Would it be possible to have maintenance look at the doors for the bathrooms on the trains? Some are very difficult to open and close. Some WD40 would probably fix the problem!

VRE Management:

Yes, if you would provide the train(s) and if possible car number you experienced this problem with to gotrains@vre.org, we can look into this right away.

Paul from Locust Grove, VA asks:

When will VRE get WIFI on its trains? This would be a major benefit to commuters.

VRE Management:

As previously stated, VRE has tested devices with the current cell technology on both lines. There are still significant areas that do not get a signal. We hope to be able to include Wi-Fi with other operational upgrades.

Terry from Warrenton VA asks:

When will the new cars be added to train 324?

VRE Management:

We anticipate this to happen in the next 2-4 weeks.

Tim from Annandale, VA asks:

VRE recently announced it was going to be cracking down on drivers entering parking lots the wrong way and speeding around corners. I have seen no changes at Backlick Road and there are many repeat violators on a daily basis. What is being done about this?

VRE Management:

We work with the local jurisdictions for traffic enforcement and will pass along your comments to Fairfax County Police Department.

Paul from Locust Grove, VA asks:

When will VRE get rid of the ancient rail cars where the air conditioning never works. While METRO also has a lot of old cars where the A/C never works....I would hope VRE aspires to a higher standard!!!

VRE Management:

You will start seeing changes in the next 2-4 weeks for 2 of the 3 train consists with legacy cars.

Dave from Manassas Park, VA asks:

Why does the holiday service announcement say there will be no 'regularly' scheduled services? Why not just "services"? VRE has an "irregular" service, it's called "S" schedule. By saying there will be no regularly scheduled services, you are implying that "S" schedule will be run. Thanks

VRE Management:

Thanks Dave for a different perspective.

Paul from Locust Grove, VA asks:

When do estimate the Spottsylvania VRE station will be operational? Do you think this will ease the parking problems at the Fredericksburg VRE station?

VRE Management:

We project the station to open summer 2015. We do expect it to ease parking problems at the Fredericksburg Station.

Nathan from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

First of all, the VRE staff does a great job! My question is, why is the VRE Operations Board investing so much public money into the system improvement projects (Agenda Item 9J-June 2014)to support the new Potomac shores station without a projected increase in system ridership or enabling additional VRE trains to operate?

VRE Management:

Thanks for the compliment. The system improvement projects are just that.... improvements to the system. They do not directly support the Potomac Shores station, although the private developers funding is being used to match grants that allow the system improvements. These improvements to the core capacity of the system will allow VRE to expand capacity and operate more efficiently.

Robin from Manassas VA asks:

Automobile traffic in/around the VRE station needs to learn to slow down and remain aware of pedestrian commuters!!! It would be great if VRE could support their 'foot traffic' with well-marked cross walks and awareness signs in your parking lots and kiss/ride areas!

VRE Management:

We will have our safety and security manager look into this.

John from Manassas, VA asks:

What happened with 324 this morning? School is back in session and everyone is back from summer vacation so ridership is going back up. 324's consist was short with no explanation or announcements (not even for station arrivals). Standing room only.....

VRE Management:

We were short one car because of a mechanical issue. We will look into the lack of communication.

Arun from Clifton, VA asks:

Is there any rules regarding smoking electronic cigarettes on VRE. I saw one person doing it. But did not know whether it is approved in VRE.

VRE Management:

Electronic cigarettes are under the same guideline as regular cigarettes, which can be found at <http://www.vre.org/service/policies.html>.

Charles from **Bristow** asks:

1. Please help me understand why some of the rest room doors are very difficult to open/close. 2. Information trains running late or when platforms are changed at Union Station are almost non-existent with no assistance from Amtrak staff.

VRE Management:

If you have a specific car number report it to gotrains@vre.org. We continue to work with Amtrak on this issue.

Stephen from **Gainesville, VA** asks:

Are there any status updates on the proposed Gainesville/Haymarket extension?

VRE Management:

There hasn't been much movement in the last several months. We hope to get an update on timelines this fall.

Tia from **Stafford, VA** asks:

Any chance of adding an additional train on the Fredericksburg line between 5:23 and 6:08?

VRE Management:

We will be adding a train but the time slot is yet to be determined.

Carol from **Fredericksburg VA** asks:

Is it possible to move the smoking area on the Fredericksburg platform from the North end to the South end? If it was at the South end, people who park in the Fredericksburg parking lot would not have to walk through the second-hand smoke at the top of the stairs from the parking lot.

VRE Management:

We agree this makes sense. Let us look at it.

nonsmokers on vre from **manassas** asks:

what is the rule regarding e-cigs? we have noticed fellow passengers puffing away.

VRE Management:

Same as regular cigarettes.

Van from **Fredericksburg VRE** asks:

It would be nice if there was a Southbound train added daily at the 2:45 pm time frame. If not, then maybe a Friday only train at the 2:45 pm time frame. This would relieve the congestion occurring every Friday due to the "Mass Exidous" movement. Only a small train (three cars).

VRE Management:

See previous question.

julie from **FBurg** asks:

What is the work being done along the tracks between Quantico and Brooke?

VRE Management:

Utility re-location in preparation for construction of an additional third track.

Dave from **Fredericksburg** asks:

Seems like there is minimal use of the displays at stations regarding the amount of information that could be provided. A clock would be nice, along with the scheduled departure time of each train. Also, VRE needs to maximize its use of social media -- Twitter, Facebook, etc. should be used more than they are to pass service information and updates.

VRE Management:

We are beginning a project to update the website which will incorporate more social media. Similarly, we are looking at upgrading the information on platform screens.

Jim from **Warrenton** asks:

As I walked onto the platform at Broad Run today, several maintenance workers were standing around

an open electrical panel smoking. Less than 3 feet from the platform. We were all in a cloud of cigarette smoke. A non-smoking platform is useless if you allow people to smoke 3 feet away. Please address this health and safety risk.

VRE Management:

We will pass this information along to our Facilities Manager.

KP from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

The queing is extremely bad, again. I thought some policy was forthcoming about that? Yesterday, I watched a conductor have to battle her way through the "Que-balls." She could have told them to please take a seat. I think it's funny that people complain about having to stand when seating is limited, but then they choose to stand half the way home so they can be the first one off the train. Don't be such a QUE-BALL!

VRE Management:

Our Policy, which has not changed is that "standing means detraining" which means do not stand until the next stop is yours. The issue is the consistent enforcement of the policy which we will work with the Conductors on.

dave from manassas asks:

when you do place the L'Enfant storage track in service (built in 2007) how will you utilize it?

VRE Management:

We are finalizing the operations plan with CSX.

ZekeRambo from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

Could you give us an update on the Spotsylvania station, such as, 1. When is the ground breaking? 2. What is the estimated opening date? 3. Will there be a stop light at entrance to Route 17? 4. Will the Spotsylvania Sheriffs department patrol the parking lot occasionally because of the isolated location? It is our hope that VRE has thought through all the issues having a station in this location.

VRE Management:

1. Groundbreaking was on August 12th. 2. Estimated summer 2015. 3. Yes 4. Yes

Matt from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Last week I saw 2 of the new cars on a Manassas Train. Why didn't you put the new cars on Train #310 or 312 which still has the old cars according to the consist page?

VRE Management:

You will see some of the legacy cars replaced in 2-4 weeks.

Dave from Lorton, VA asks:

Keolis now operates the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Train as well. They offer this app, how come VRE doesn't offer an app like this? <http://www.keolis.com/mbta-commuter-rail-app/>

VRE Management:

Our mobile ticketing app will have similar functionality (and will be way cooler!!!)

Adam Edwards from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

Does the VRE ever plan to do weekend service between Fredericksburg and Washington DC? I know there are many of us who would like to go to Washington area on the weekends but will not brave the perils of I-95 to get there.

VRE Management:

Not in the near future, however, Amtrak does run service on the weekends.

Tim from Springfield, VA asks:

It's bad enough some passengers like to queue early, so why do passengers have to open the vestibule door so early and keep holding it open? Also, don't keep it open taking with the conductor. The door does not need to be open until we get to the platform.

VRE Management:

All valid points.

Dave from Woodbridge, Va asks:

Can you all add an extra car to the 300 Express train. It's still a very popular and crowded train.

VRE Management:

We too see the need and are trying to work it into our near-term operating plan.

Jim from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

I noticed that VRE has put up new "no parking" signs on the transition road from the gravel lot to the paved lot at Leeland Rd. Commuters still ignore the signs. Are there plans for VRE and/or Stafford County to enforce these parking restrictions. Parking on this road makes it dangerous for both drivers and pedestrians.

VRE Management:

The signs are the first step and Stafford County should enforce it.

Mary from Richmond asks:

I know I have ask this question thousands of time. But here it is again. For people that live in Richmond, why are not allowed to use their VRE tickets and step up to ride Amtrak from Richmond, VA DC. Thanks

VRE Management:

Our cross-honor agreement only covers the VRE service.

Gerry from Fredericksburg, Va asks:

When the Spotsylvania Station is completed will train 300 (Express train) bypass this station or will it be added or will the Fredericksburg stop be eliminated?

VRE Management:

300 will stop at both Spotsylvania and Fredericksburg.

Gerry from Fredericksburg, Va asks:

The train conductors continue to perform in an outstanding manner with assistance to passengers and always looking out for our safety- how are these folks recognized? Is there a way that the conductors can be mentioned in the VRE Ride Magazine?

VRE Management:

We appreciate the compliment and will pass this along to Keolis Management. We have started to recognize Keolis personnel in our RIDE Magazine and will continue to do so.

Jim from Manassas, VA asks:

Could you follow up with your first question and explain why there aren't any plans to add another quiet car to the trains? It doesn't seem like that much of a cost for improved customer comfort.

VRE Management:

Not everyone wants to be quiet.

Dave from Hayes, VA asks:

When will the mobile ticket app be available?

VRE Management:

We plan to test in January will full rollout in April 2015.

Piggyback on Joann from VA asks:

Re: Joann's comment.....There are a few of the men who need to dial it down a few notches. You talk too much, too loudly, move around the cars too much, and generally make a nuisance of yourselves. Flirting and showing off presents anything but a professional appearance. And I'm astounded at the guy on 327 who can't pass any of the microphones without having to make an announcement. Regular riders will know who I mean***** Don't forget the WOMEN FLIRTING instead of working

VRE Management:

Good point. Thanks!

A.L. from Burke, VA asks:

Comment...I'd like to make a suggestion that VRE improve its communications via Train Talk when there are train problems/disruptions. A couple of weeks ago the Manassas line had equip problems but the communications regarding this event were very spotty and number of people waiting on the platform were confused on which trains were operating.

VRE Management:

We agree.

Mike from Burke asks:

Any chance to work with the various jurisdictions to increase the amount of recycling at the stations? All too often I see the trash cans at Burke and L'Enfant filled with recycleable plastics because there is no option for this.

VRE Management:

Our Facilities contractor does sort the recycle bins before disposal.

Dave from Quantico asks:

What is the possibility of the express making a stop in Quantico. The parking lot is filled with people waiting in their cars for the first train as the Express comes flying through. I think it would be beneficial for later train capacity.

VRE Management:

We will continue to look at this as we refine our operational analysis.

Kayla from Stafford va asks:

Why cant you run one or two trains during govt. holidays? Not everyone gets those days off, and we are stuck! If someone needs the train they will work with your schedule, its better than nothing!

VRE Management:

We have attempted this several times and did not get the ridership we needed to support it.

David from Woodbridge asks:

In the past it has been noted that vehicles leaving the Woodbridge VRE are sitting in the turn lane to Route 1 from Dawson Beach Road. I personally got behind someone that refused to turn despite the signs clearly stating that before 5PM it is a turn lane. Can VRE contact Prince William County to patrol the area around the time VRE 303 and possibly 305 arrives to Woodbridge?

VRE Management:

We continue to work with Prince William County on all issues related to safety.

Ted from Fredericksburg, Va asks:

It would be helpful if the number of the car you are riding is posted inside the car, maybe under the LED/digital display board. It would make it easier to report problems in that particular car - like too cold, or, if in an emergency, riders can use their cell phone to direct emergency personnel to the exact location where they are needed.

VRE Management:

Yes, we agree. We have looked at some alternative locations for numbers and will initiate a project to install numbers later this fall.

PJ from Burke asks:

in an earlier question, you indicated the the average for all VRE trains is approximately 4 gallons per mile. CSX indicates that they move a ton of freight nearly 450 miles on a single gallon of fuel. Can you explain the discrepancy?

VRE Management:

Both numbers are correct. However, we power passenger cars (heating, air conditioning, lighting, etc.) off the same fuel tank with a separate engine. This really isn't an apples to apples comparison.

Congestion from 300 Express asks:

Each morning on the 300 Express there are many that stand in the vestibules from Alexandria until they get off at L'Enfant. Are we now allowed to stand in there? Also, how often are tickets supposed to be checked? I think they check my ticket at least once a quarter in the mornings now.

VRE Management:

No, passengers are not allowed to stand in vestibules and tickets should be checked at least once per trip.

JAY from **Stafford, VA** asks:

A majority of the lights in the upper parking lot at Brooke station have been out two days in a row. Can this be checked out?

VRE Management:

We are currently looking into this issue.

MK from **Fairfax** asks:

Any chance that the display boards could notify us of any known Metro delays? Several of us who go downtown have the choice of either taking the red line (from Union) or Orange/Blue (from L'Enfant). If Metro has a line specific delay it would be good to know so we can decide which station to get off at.

VRE Management:

We will keep this in mind for our future communication enhancements along with real-time bus arrival information.

dave from **Kingstowne** asks:

When more stations are added to fredericksburg line, will you increase the number of cars on the trains? if not, will it lead to over-crowding?

VRE Management:

We are looking into lengthening existing trains once funding becomes available.

julie from **FBurg** asks:

not everyone wants to be noisy either. that seemed to be a rude disrespectful response. i don't ever sit in the quiet car because the people are not friendly (always looking for the tiniest peep so they can complain or shoot you the hairy eyeball). But that answer was not nice.

VRE Management:

That was not our intent. The truth is there is not enough demand for additional quiet cars on our existing trains.

VRE Management:

Thanks for another great month of questions. As always we appreciate your participation. Sorry there were a few questions we didn't get to. You can submit them to gotrains@vre.org

See tracks? Think train!

Stay Safe!

Rich, Chris, et al.