

Let's Talk!

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



There are currently 31 questions waiting to be answered.

VRE Management:

Happy New Year!

As we look forward to some of the exciting things coming in 2015 like the Spotsylvania station and the additional Fredericksburg Line train, we also want to address a few issues we had closing out 2014. We see a few questions have been submitted regarding the decision to run an "S" schedule on the 29th, 30th, and 31st of December. The decision was made because of the low expected ridership levels, but we made sure to put the longest trains out there that we could, in case the crowds were bigger than expected. The issues that many experienced with crowding on the 29th and 30th in particular were a result of not opening the extra cars on those trains early enough to support the demand. While we will still operate "S" schedules on occasion, we will now make sure that every car on the train is open and available at the time the train leaves its origination point, to avoid similar issues.

On to the questions!

Lenart from Fredericksburg Va asks:

Will there be a working stop light on Benchmark Rd. and Hwy 17?

VRE Management:

This is a VDOT project that will include a light, turn lanes, and other improvements.

Todd from Gainesville, VA asks:

Thank you for making the VRE an enjoyable experience. A question and a comment: Can a step-up ticket be used on designated Amtrak trains on days the VRE does not operate (holidays, etc.)? Also, you frequently tell people to send questions to gotrains@vre.org. After doing this three times, my experience is no one ever bothers to respond.

VRE Management:

Thanks for the compliment. On days where we do not run service or when we run an "S" schedule Amtrak step-up tickets may be used if Amtrak is operating their normal schedule. If the Amtrak train numbers listed on our schedule are operating then step-up tickets may be used.

Matt from Broad Run asks:

Piper Lane beyond the railroad underpass is in much need of pothole repair. It's the section not maintained by VDOT. There is one in particular that is quickly putting a beating on my car each morning.

VRE Management:

This is a tough area for asphalt. We'll look into repairs as usual but winter ice and spring flooding will continue to present a challenge.

Ray from Crystal City asks:

I want to apologize for violating VRE rules. The other day I heard the announcement about the train arriving and the requirement that we "remain behind the yellow line at all times." I have had to cross the line to board the train, but saw no other way of getting on :(I'm sorry... Phew! That feels better getting off my chest! That said... how are we to board if we must "remain behind the yellow line at all times?"

VRE Management:

Thanks for obeying the rules. You can cross the yellow line once the train comes to a complete and full stop.

Mike from Lorton, VA asks:

Only 1 speaker has been working at Lorton for over a year, have mentioned to conductors several times, are the others ever going to be fixed? When? Thanks! Mike

VRE Management:

We will inspect all speakers and repair those that are found not working.

Carol Leon from Fairfax, VA asks:

Approximately one trip out of every two, the Union Station escalator is turned off as passengers on Train 332 are trying to get from the platform into the station. It's not only an annoying situation but also a dangerous one, as the escalator stops while it's loaded with passengers. Can the escalator be kept on for a few minutes longer?

VRE Management:

Amtrak controls the terminal at Union Station. We will continue to work with them on this issue.

Gaile from Manassas asks:

I've seen TSA and DHS law enforcement on the Crystal City platform and riding in the southbound train vestibules. I don't even know that they're on the train until I get off. (1) Are they waiting for a bad guy to get off at Crystal City and (2) why don't they walk the trains for more visibility?

VRE Management:

The TSA and DHS operations mix visibility with other techniques and processes, these include uniformed and plain clothes personnel

Puopon De'Grase from Falmouth asks:

Thanks for all the great service. Only minor inconvenience during the week of S trains. What is a major pooper is all the dog poop at Leeland Station. I was taught to go around the dog poop, but it is everywhere along the sidewalk and around the lot perimeter. Stafford County has a pooper scooper law. How about getting Stafford County to put up signs, or even better, put up a poop disposal station with bags. This is just a bunch of dog s ..., well you know.

VRE Management:

We will let Stafford County know.

Brian from Fredericksburg, Va asks:

When will the Spotsylvania station be ready and open?

VRE Management:

Projected Summer 2015

nathan from Gainesville, VA asks:

Why is it that so often, there is a freight train stopped and blocking the crossing leading into the airport / Broad Run station?

VRE Management:

Bristow is a NS crew change location. The length of the train determines whether the crossing will be blocked. The train normally isn't there long. However, yesterday due to the weather the crew had trouble getting to the train which is why the crossing was blocked longer than normal.

Eddie from Manassas VA asks:

When will we ever have a wifi on board? I know there were rumors a few years back but still haven't seen any progress.

VRE Management:

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. Currently there is no estimated time.

derrick from fredericksburg asks:

do you ever think you will get enough seating so, no one has to stand up on the way home after a long day of work. that the last thing i want to do is stand up on the train half way home

VRE Management:

We strive to provide adequate seating on every train by continuously looking at passenger loads on every train. We provide the larger trains consist to the trains that have the greater loads. We will be adding a train on the Fredericksburg line. We have 12 new cars on order.

Fred from Fairfax, VA asks:

Please consider adding platform announcements for the arrival of Amtrak trains at the platforms in the same manner in which the VRE trains are announced. This would eliminate confusion and last minute shuffling on the platforms for riders wishing to board Amtrak, especially at L'Enfant and Alexandria.

VRE Management:

We will see if those announcements can be added.

Charlene from Manassas VA asks:

I know that it says electronics are to be turned off in the quiet car, but can kindles be used for reading a book in the quiet car?

VRE Management:

Yes. If there is sound generated from the device please silence it while in the quiet car.

Daniel from Bristow, VA asks:

When making a right onto Piper from Broad Run, the oncoming drivers coming from around the backside of the station travel at a rate faster than the blind curve allows us to see. I and others frequently get an angry driver on our tail because while we check to our left, we can't account for fast drivers. Perhaps a speed restriction or other idea? I'm waiting for the day someone gets rear-ended by a speeding driver coming around that bend - because we can't see the NASCAR drivers.

VRE Management:

We will raise this point with Prince William County.

Joe from Stafford from Stafford asks:

Has there been any consideration for either adding a southbound Fredericksburg train during the mid afternoon hours (between #301 and #303. Or, changing the #301 to leave about one hour later than currently scheduled? Your #300 riders in the morning are forced to wait on the 302 to get home...and the 300 leaves too early for a typical 8 hour work day.

VRE Management:

Yes. We will be adding a Fredericksburg Line train. The actual schedule has not been determined yet.

David from Fredericksburg Va. asks:

Is there any chance of adding another quiet car to the morning train? I ride the train that leaves the station at 5:05 and the quiet car is always full.

VRE Management:

No. We have no plans of adding an additional quiet car.

Natasha from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Will riders at Rippon, Woodbridge and Lorton have to pay for parking in order to fund renovations at these stations?

VRE Management:

We have no plans to charge for parking at any of our stations.

Linda from Manassas, Virginia asks:

With yesterday's weather event known in advance, why was the Manassas city station platform not adequately cleaned or salted? The platform was still not cleared when the early afternoon train arrived after 2 PM. Getting off the train was dangerous with the icy snow completely covering the area that a rider had to step on to when exiting, and the inclines had not been salted nor cleared at all.

VRE Management:

The platforms were pre-treated, the snow started at the beginning of our service window. Our crews were out addressing platforms during service as they could.

Steve from Woodbridge, VA asks:

The far north shelter on the Rippon platform recently got repaired and a fresh coat of paint, but the pexiglass walls were removed and never replaced. Now that winter is upon us, when will the shelter be completed, so we can escape the upcoming windy weather?

VRE Management:

There are no plans to add plexiglas to the former cages.

Heather from Burke asks:

At the Rolling Rd station parking lot, I often see large trucks back into the spaces on the south side of the lot, subsequently blocking part of the sidewalk. There is one truck, in particular, that does this daily. This makes it difficult for pedestrians to use the sidewalk without having to walk on the hill. Once the snow and ice is here, it can be dangerous to try to get around these vehicles. I've wrote to VRE about this last year and was told parking was periodically monitored but I haven't seen any change.

VRE Management:

We will look into the possibility of adding concrete wheel stops to alleviate this issue.

Tom from Fredericksburg VA asks:

Trains are getting more crowded. What is the plan for relieving the congestion?

VRE Management:

With the addition of another train to the Fredericksburg line, we anticipate a reduction in over-crowding. We are looking into getting additional storage areas to be able to accommodate larger train set. These adjustments will take place over time.

Angela from Lorton, VA asks:

I do not know the solution to this, but I usually take the 307 home, and sometimes it is hard to get off the train if there is standing room only, and people are blocking the exit, I guess because there is nowhere else to stand. Is there any solution to this?

VRE Management:

The conductors should ask anyone standing in the aisles or vestibules to step off the train until passengers have alighted. They can then re-board.

Greg from Burke asks:

Thank you for the reliable, clean, and efficient service. One question, can your website be made mobile friendly? Thanks

VRE Management:

Thank you for the compliment. We recently kicked off a project to redesign our website making it more user friendly and mobile compatible. You can look for it to debut later this year.

Darren from Burke, VA asks:

Hello. Are you aware that 2 of the 3 validation machines at the Rolling Rd. station are broken? Are you also aware that Manassas Line 328 arrived at and departed from Rolling Rd. this morning early? This resulted in numerous people running through an icy parking lot, only to wait in line for the 1 working machine. Also, despite seeing this issue, the conductor (merely a few feet away from the line of people waiting to validate), turned his back and closed the train doors, leaving several stranded passengers on the platform, some even with validated tickets. This is UNACCEPTABLE!

VRE Management:

We will have the technicians check the TVMs. As always if you have issues purchasing or validating tickets please see the conductor prior to boarding. Train 328 arrived almost 2 minutes late and departed nearly 2 minutes late.

Dave from Woodbridge asks:

When will the additional train be added to the Fredrickburg line? Last spring the conductors told me in October 2014 it should be added.

VRE Management:

That was our initial goal, with our revised plan the additional train will be added before the Spotsylvania station opens, which is projected to open Summer 2015.

robert from potomac shores asks:

What's going on with the Cap Improvement Projects - Rippon stair reparis, Lorton platfrom extension etc. Can you update the web pages with some current info?

VRE Management:

Both projects are underway. We will make sure the website is up to date and accurate.

Dave from Fredericksburg asks:

Every time there is one of these forums, I always ask the same question but it never gets addressed. So I'll ask it again: Can VRE make more use of their in-station displays. perhaps adding the time of day, when the next train is supposed to depart, etc.? Seems like a great way to pass information, but it is not being used to it's full potential in my opinion. Thanks!

VRE Management:

We are currently looking to do a pilot test at our Crystal City Station which will include enhanced station displays to include: news feeds, bus arrival times, and other transit information. Stay tuned.

Dale from Dale City asks:

Rather than having police monitoring drivers crosing Route ! at Woodbridge (when it says right turn only), recommend working with the county to have both lanes be able to cross Route 1 between 3:00 and 5:00. The traffic will be less congested.

VRE Management:

This area is being studied for opportunities by Prince William County.

Ken from Burke Centre, Virginia asks:

Although I may have missed announcements leading up to the week of December 22, it seems that the decision to go to an "S" schedule for the week of December 29 was not well publicized, either via email notifications or announcements on the platforms. Since the holiday season does spread over a 2 week period, more advanced notice would be better.

VRE Management:

Our operating calendar is updated a year in advance. Please see our website for the most up to date information.

Joanne from Gainesville, VA asks:

Moving back to Gainesville in July so I'll be commuting to Crystal City from Broad Run. How is parking now at Broad Run? How quickly does the lot fill up?

VRE Management:

Parking at Broad Run is near capacity. This usually affects the last two trains each morning.

Mark from Burke VA asks:

The tone of conductor's "announcements" the last 6 months or so has become increasing harsh and, for lack of a better word, almost accusatory. The majority of you passengers do NOT ride without validated tickets or commit any other of the numerous offenses for which we receive long-winded, harsh "announcements." Please speak to your riders briefly, using a courteous tone. Even a "please," if said harshly or sarcastically, would be better left unsaid.

VRE Management:

We will pass this along to Keolis management.

Andrew from Woodbridge, VA asks:

What is the possibility that the train schedules could be adjusted in the next few years, and what are the plans to have VRE trains equipped with wi-fi access?

VRE Management:

The schedules will be adjusted when we add the new Fredericksburg train and Spotsylvania Station.

Chad from Fairfax, VA asks:

Does VRE ever issue promotional items or even just offer items for sale, such as lanyards, ticket holders, luggage tags, etc. to promote its commuter train service? I wear my VRE pass along with my work lanyard and have had several people ask about the pass, as they were completely unaware of the service. Additional promotional-type items would serve to increase visibility of the service.

VRE Management:

We host Meet the Management events in May and June every year where these items are made available. If you would like a ticket holder, luggage tag, etc., please contact us at gotrains@vre.org.

Meredith from Gainesville asks:

When the "S" schedule is implemented, in addition to the reduction in frequency, please do not also eliminate services, such as the Quiet Car. For some with very long commutes the Quiet Car is requirement. Last year after the holidays I requested that when holiday schedules are reduced and consists shortened, that the Quiet Cars are not eliminated. At the time I was told VRE would look into it. However, VRE maintained the same operations this year. What is the problem with relocating the Quiet Car when VRE closes off cars?

VRE Management:

We will not be closing off any cars. Quiet cars will be available on all trains.

David from Woodbridge, VA asks:

It is 2015 and Congress still has not passed a bill to increase the commuter subsidy back to \$240. VRE and Metro want more and keep raising fares and so \$130 is not enough to cover it and I like to keep paying more because VRE raises its fares. What is VRE doing about this? I've emailed my representing congress person. So, VRE PLEASE DO NOT RAISE FARES this year. You need to stop putting the burden on your riders.

VRE Management:

VRE continues to advocate for an increase in the transit subsidy and parity with the parking subsidy.

Tim from Lorton, VA asks:

Will VRE change the image on its monthly train tickets? It still has the old locomotive and single level cars that VRE doesn't have anymore

VRE Management:

We will update the artwork on our paper tickets when we place the next order.

Earlane from Woodbridge VA asks:

we are still standing on train 300, there are no seats when we get on at woodbridge. when will you add another car to 300?

VRE Management:

We added a 6th car to train 300 in 2014 and that has reduced crowding issues. Typically there are seats available in the northern most car.

Sean from Fredericksburg asks:

How early will VRE make the decision to run an "S" schedule during inclement weather?

VRE Management:

We try to make operational decisions by 4am so that we can update our website and inform our passengers through TrainTalk.

Jess from Xyz asks:

Who are the people who we see with green coats standing by the tracks after our train stops unexpectedly?

VRE Management:

We are required to perform operational testing on our trains to ensure a safe ride. That means trains will sometimes be stopped unexpectedly. The people you may see along the tracks could include: VRE and Keolis management as well as representatives from our host railroads Norfolk Southern, CSX, and Amtrak.

Debbie from Broad Run, VA asks:

I keep seeing mention of a new Fredericksburg Station and a new line for Fredericksburg. I don't

understand why that line is receiving all these new things when the mention of a Haymarket/Gainesville Station has been mentioned for Manassas for a very long time and it keeps getting pushed further and further away. I keep waiting for you all to say this new station idea has been cancelled. When will final commitments to build this station finally occur for Manassas?

VRE Management:

The Gainesville/Haymarket extension is still an open project. Unfortunately, we do not have a time line associated with its time of completion.

Custom from erservice asks:

With all of the inquiries relating to fixing or repairing certain items at stations and having to wait until the next month to ask again. Is there a way for VRE to document these issues and update them as they are being fixed? Like an open ticket kinda thing?

VRE Management:

Thank you for a good recommendation. We are working on implementing a corporate database system that will include an issues tracking system that will help us document and update open items.

Meredith from Gainesville asks:

To emphasize the point made by Daniel from Bristow regarding the Piper Lane speeds, I was rear-ended by another driver just yesterday afternoon. This is a dangerous intersection.

VRE Management:

Thanks for the information. More data for Prince William County.

Claire from Fredericksburg VA asks:

A lot of mornings when I take the later trains I have been unable to find parking in the fredericksburg lots because they have been full. Also, when coming back at night there are not any lights in the back parking lot which is very dangerous due to pot holes etc. Is there going to be any additions made to the Fredericksburg parking and any future plans for light posts in the back parking lot?

VRE Management:

Fredericksburg parking will be re-evaluated once the Spotsylvania station opens.

Marie from Woodbridge asks:

Are there plans for new schedules for both lines? Is there an estimated timeframe to release the new schedules?

VRE Management:

Yes, we will be making adjustments to the schedules on both lines prior to or concurrent with the opening of the new Spotsylvania station.

VRE Management:

Sorry we are out of time. Another great hour of questions to kick off the New Year. As always if your question was not answered please submit it to gotrains@vre.org. In the subject line put "Online Forum" and we will make sure it gets answered.

See Tracks! Think Train!

See you next month!

Chris et al