

Let's Talk!

The next VRE online forum will start on Wednesday, July 1st at 12:00pm. Click on the "VRE" Button below to submit a question.



There are currently 13 questions waiting to be answered.

VRE Management:

We apologize for this morning delays. With the storms last night we wanted to make sure everything was safe before we proceeded with service. There were several reports of area where the tracks were washed out (ballast removed from the track area, which supports the stability of the rails.) Not the way to start July but safety first.

For the best ride into DC for July 4th we still have a limited amount of tickets available. Call 703-684-1001 to purchase tickets for schedule information visit <http://www.vrespecialevents.org/firecracker-trains.htm>.

Now on to the questions!

Baker from Fairfax, VA asks:

1. Will you report any train delays or cancellations to WTOP for people who listen to the station. 2. You use intercom system to broadcast holidays schedules at the union station. Why can't you also broadcast which track the VRE trains will be in the afternoon? It's a guessing game with the tracks as to where my train is going to be everyday.

VRE Management:

The train tracks are determined by the train dispatchers at Union Station, because of the volume of train flow train tracks are not definite until about 10 minutes prior to departure. Trains are coming in and out of the station and the track that is available at the time our train is approaching the station is the track that is assigned. We do work with local media and most subscribe to TrainTalk as well.

David from Manassas, VA asks:

With the fair increase effective July 1, what enhanced benefits can riders expect for this increased cost?

VRE Management:

We will be adding a train and a new station this year.

Deborah from Springfield VA asks:

When will the elevator on the Metro side be fixed? Thank you.

VRE Management:

The Elevator is currently being rehabilitated. We do not have an estimated time frame as to when it will be back and service. We are still working to find alternative solutions to address this concern. We will be running a shuttle for all VRE trains between the two sides at Franconia/Springfield station for passengers needing assistance. Stay tuned to TrainTalk for more information.

SAM from Burke, VA asks:

Why are the escalators never moving downward in the afternoon for VRE patrons? The VRE customers are step children compared to AMTRAK and MARC Customers because they are given more service attention than us. I would rather pay a little more for the fare to get the same kind of attention.

VRE Management:

On behalf of VRE, Amtrak is in the process of hiring a station manager to improve the quality of service provided at that station within the next month. They will be dedicated to VRE service.

Kristen from Burke, VA asks:

Last week the WMATA bus drivers seemed perplexed when I tried to use my weekly mobile ticket for a free transfer to and from the VRE. Can VRE and Metro remind drivers that VRE mobile tickets are accepted on WMATA buses? Thanks.

VRE Management:

We have notified WMATA about our mobile ticketing app, the Bus Operators have been trained, and we will follow up. If you are having an issue ask the operator to call the dispatcher for clarification

Gary from Alexandria asks:

Good morning - I've noticed that there are name plates on some of the locomotives. Is this new, and how can you get your name on a VRE engine :-).

VRE Management:

The name plates added to the locomotives were to honor some of our current and former Operations Board members who were instrumental in making VRE what it is today.

Linda from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

It would be nice to have vending machines for snacks and drinks on the VRE platforms. Many stations are not close to stores and on hot days it would be nice to purchase drinks before boarding the train. Any thought to outsourcing this idea?

VRE Management:

We currently do not have plans to add vending machines to our stations.

G from Alexandria, va asks:

Why is the metro option used limitedly and after trains are late? The train can be late for more than 30 minutes and no metro option is given. On the limited times the metro option is provided, it is after 45 minutes of waiting for a late train. The option should be given when VRE knows the train is going to be late.

VRE Management:

We will work to implement the Metro Option sooner, when appropriate.

Dave from Woodbridge, Va asks:

When will the additional train be added to the Fredricksburg Line? Last summer I was told by a condutor is would be the October 2014, then this spring I was told by another conductor it will be July 2015. Do you all have an estimated start date now since it is July 2015 now?

VRE Management:

The new train will be added with the opening of the new Spotsy station which is still projected to open later this summer.

Alan from Spotsylvania County, VA asks:

Would you give us the status of the new station in Spotsy? Do you still anticipate the opening to be this summer? Also, are there plans to have a traffic light at the entrance to the train station and route 17? I can envision major traffic jams ended north, south or down benchmark road.

VRE Management:

Yes, we still anticipate opening later this summer. There will be a traffic signal at the Route 17 intersection.

Vicki Wade from Warrenton asks:

Can you please provide umbrella bags? Train floor and seats get very wet and they a are slippery. Will you get wi fi?

VRE Management:

We do not have plans to offer umbrella bags.

Vicki Wade from Warrenton asks:

It is an oxymoron to have 2 conflicting signs by the side row of seat pop ups stating Bicycle and Priority seating. There is a bicycle right now blocking 4 seats. Only one is available and bike owner is sitting in another seat. So not when it gets crowded many will be standing. Wednesday is a busy day and this began at Broad Run, I can see collapsible bikes but this is a huge bike. The guy should pay for 5 seats.

VRE Management:

Full size bicycles are only be allowed on the last three northbound, the mid-day, any reverse-flow, and the last three southbound trains on each line. If a passenger is in need of priority seating speak with the conductor and he/she will make the necessary adjustment to make sure seating is available. They bicycle sign is only on one half of the car.

JT from DC asks:

Does VRE have the capability to provide credit for earned free ride certificates as an option for customers who purchase monthly tickets? This option will provide immediate monetary compensation for monthly pass holders affected by unexpected delays. Since monthly pass holders pay for a monthly pass, the current method only allows the customer to collect and more often give away due to certificate expiration date; therefore not actually being compensated when I would say monthly ticket holders are your biggest customers. Thanks!

VRE Management:

An FRC is not intended to be a monetary compensation. Monthly pass holders may wish to save the FRC's for months when you take vacation and do not intend to ride all month.

Mike from Manassas, VA asks:

Under bridge next to L'Enfant Plaza need some cleaning, its getting worst everyday.

VRE Management:

We will get the word out to the different entities responsible for this area and get things cleaned.

K.H. from Centreville, VA asks:

The new fare increase started today and I was wondering if tickets that have not expired will still be honored or do they need to be exchanged to reflect the new price?

VRE Management:

All non-expired tickets previously purchased before the fare increase will be honored

John from DC asks:

Are FRCs being honored for Firecracker Special for trips in and out of DC?

VRE Management:

No, you have to have a special event ticket for the Firecracker train. No regular VRE ticket/FRC will be accepted on the train.

Mike from Spotsy, VA asks:

Are any of the Amtrak trains going to stop at the new Spotsylvania station?

VRE Management:

No, not at this time.

Ann from Leland asks:

How often is the daily download updated? On the website it says "VRE posts delay information online daily" but as of 830 this morning the last day posted is 17 Jun.

VRE Management:

The daily download is updated with current information.

Martha from Fredericksburg asks:

What's the hold up with the Spotsy station? Can you please provide a new projected open month? Please don't say "later this summer".

VRE Management:

We are still are projecting (estimating) the opening of Spotsy station for late summer. If anything changes we will give an update.

Leslie from Fredericksburg asks:

Do you think VRE step ups will be reduced back down to \$3 in the future?

VRE Management:

As of now we don't have an estimated price for future step-up tickets

Debra from Woodbridge, VA asks:

When are the shrubs at the Woodbridge Station going to be trimmed? They are too tall and going over the sidewalk. Thank you!

VRE Management:

We will work with our facilities manager to have this addressed.

L. Anna from Fredericksburg, Virginia asks:

Good Morning, Today the VRE instituted a fare increase. General convention indicates that an increase in price would mean some improvement of services. However, at the dawn of this fare increase, I instead experienced 25 and 20 minute delays in consecutive morning commutes. If technicians were aware of the malfunction, why wasn't it resolved in the 24 hours between morning commutes? If they were able to fix the issue in 20 minutes sitting on the track, why wasn't it possible to prevent the delay by fixing the issue before the train left the service yard?

VRE Management:

The delays today isn't a reflection of poor service but a reflection of ensuring our customers' safety. There was a washout along the tracks and we had to ensure it was safe to operate trains over the area. Track inspectors and maintainers were dispatched to make sure the area was safe for operation. Then trains were released.

Valerie from Findlay ohio asks:

Any firecracker tickets left from quantico?

VRE Management:

We do have some available, call 703-684-1001.

Mike from Stafford, VA asks:

I am a monthly ticket holder. My concern is that today is July 1, 2015. The cost of a ticket has gone up and the trains were late. My train, 302 put me into Union Station almost an hour late and we did not get offered a Free Ride Certificate (FRC) as the conductor was busy talking and when exiting the train, there was not a conductor to be seen to inquire if there is a change in the practice. It is not about a free ticket for me, but I do know people who can only afford to ride the train part time and slug the rest of the time. Would love to hear the answer. Thanks

VRE Management:

If you didn't not receive an FRC from your conductor please submit a FRC request to gotrains@vre.org

Patricia from Manassas, Virginia asks:

Good Afternoon, It has been several years that the VRE has been in operation. There have been many positive improvements along the way, but when are we going to have Wifi in our trains?

VRE Management:

Until cell towers are put in place all along our rail system so that riders have 100% connectivity Wi-Fi will not be available.

Christina from Manassas Va asks:

I have already allotted amounts to VRE mobile for tickets. Now I receive a text stating the fares go up July 1 and the smart benefits do not go into until today July 1. I am therefore short so how do I purchase a ten trip ticket then using VRE mobile. Also, is there a customer service phone number for VRE mobile?

VRE Management:

You can split the payment between smart benefits and a credit card for the remaining balance. Call 1-844-353-3408 if you need help doing this.

W from Woodbridge, VA asks:

First, the platform at L'Enfant smells so bad, I have about this and emailed about this for months and nothing. Its horrible, especially when its humid. Second are courtesy: BACKPACKS - just in the past week I have been hit twice but a backpack. Also, can people stop pushing to get off the train. Also, a lot of people aren't practicing OPSEC - I learned where one guy worked, how much money he made,

where he lived and what TSP plan he uses within like 10 minutes on the train.

VRE Management:

Courtesy reminder from a fellow passenger.

Ray from Manassas asks:

On 331, 3rd door. Why do Broad Run passengers insist on blocking the stairs and aisle before the train even gets to Manassas. Thx for letting me vent.

VRE Management:

Another courtesy reminder.

David from Woodbrige, VA asks:

Will VRE add the new Fredericksburg Train this month?

VRE Management:

The train will be added with the opening of the Spotsylvania station later this summer.

David from Woodbridge, VA asks:

This morning Train #306 was going way to slow north of Franconia-Springfield to Crystal City making us an additional 15 minutes late. Since we already 5 minutes late, we don't have time to go slow and should speed up to make up for lost time. This is unacceptable. Also, the conductors did not announce why we were going so slow

VRE Management:

If there are trains traveling ahead in close proximity trains have to travel at slower speeds for safety.

David from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Why did CSX remove track #1 near L'Enfant Plaza? This track has been used by freight trains and was installed a few years ago to minimize delays.

VRE Management:

A temporary track was installed which still allows freight traffic to pass through the area.

Andrew from Manassas Park asks:

Who is responsible for adding pavement markings and signage at VRE stations? VRE or the municipality?

VRE Management:

VRE doesn't own all of the parking lots, however VRE does maintain some of them. You would have to provide the station you are inquiring about to Gotrains@vre.org .

John from Manassas Park asks:

Why is the VRE Firecracker Train not stopping in Manassas Park this year?

VRE Management:

The Firecracker train will stop at Manassas Park.

Christine from Stafford, VA asks:

Hello...Is there a plan to repaint the Brooke Road parking lot? In particular, when folks are exiting the parking lot, they do not heed the stop "sign" painted on the pavement, partly by choice, but partly because the pavement signage is faded. I think it would be helpful if the lot had more visible signage, requiring drivers to come to a full stop.

VRE Management:

We will ask our facilities manager to address this.

Diana from Lorton, VA asks:

Is VRE still accepting TransitChek as a form of payment? It is not working on the app.

VRE Management:

Please try again. If that doesn't work call 703-684-1001 and ask for Jeremy.

Lori from Manassas Park, VA asks:

Would VRE ever consider allowing a roving food vendor on the train, like the old 'cigarette girls' of old? I'm sure some enterprising food vendor would jump at the chance to sell bottled water, cookies, and chips on the train. Since many of us don't have any food vendors at our stations (Manassas Park, Burke, Rolling Road, Backlick Road), an hour is a long ride with a growling stomach.

VRE Management:

We do not have plans to add that type of service at this time.

Todd from Bristow, VA asks:

The Broad Run station parking lot has some *huge* potholes from the winter snowplowing that need to be fixed. They're getting bigger and bigger as more the asphalt around breaks up. This also goes for the section of Piper Lane right in front of the access road that is not maintained by the state. Please fix!!

VRE Management:

We will notify Prince William County to get this fix.

Mike from Ponax, VA asks:

Just had to give a shout out for the excellent customer service. I was having problems with SmartBenefits and the Mobile App and Jeremy Flores quickly and courteously helped me solve the problem. Thanks!

VRE Management:

Thanks for the compliment!

Nilly from Dumfries, VA asks:

Is there a press release for the fare increase?

VRE Management:

Yes, it is on the website. We also sent out TrainTalks, Facebook messages, and Twitter messages about the fare increase.

Bree from Woodbridge, VA asks:

When will the VRE begin operating northbound and southbound daily and all day?

VRE Management:

Please take a look at our system plan 2040 http://www.vre.org/about/strategic/strategic_plan.htm.

Cathy from Virginia asks:

How often are the bridges inspected on our routes? I have noticed a big jolt on the bridge before Quantico in the evenings when we are headed South. We have a big jolt when we hit the bridge, and sway a tad more than we have been. Since there has been a lot of water under the bridges, and an earthquake in recent years, I am curious about bridge inspections below the tracks. Thank you.

VRE Management:

Out host railroads inspect bridges and other railroad infrastructure in accordance with federal regulations.

Liz from Fburg asks:

All week there's been a dead pigeon on the sidewalk under the north side bridge at L'enfant. It's the worst I've seen. What are some of the DC offices that deal with this area? I'd like to send them pictures of what me and my fellow riders have to deal with every day.

VRE Management:

We will ask our facilities manager to contact the appropriate parties.

CER from F'burg asks:

In Mobile Ticketing, do you plan to sweep out remaining balances in SmartBenefits like CommuterDirect does every month?

VRE Management:

Yes.

Tom from Bristow, VA asks:

I purchased several single-ride and 10-ride tickets for trips between zones 1 and 6 in the last couple months and haven't used them all up yet. Now that the fare increase is in effect, will VRE honor those tickets for the same zone 1-6 (and reverse) trip? If not, how will I be able to add value to those tickets upon validation so that the tickets are not wasted? Thank you.

VRE Management:

Yes, we will still honor those tickets.

Robin from Broad Run asks:

Rudeness from Amtrak personnel at Union Station!! The guys driving those little carts on the platforms are just incredibly rude; and they endanger passengers with the way they drive. Could VRE address this with Amtrak?

VRE Management:

We will address this with Amtrak.

Betty from Manassas asks:

Just an FYI. Ellen is an excellent conductor. She is very professional and efficient. She is an asset to your team.

VRE Management:

Thank you for the compliment! We will pass this along to her manager.

Tom from Fredericksburg asks:

VRE Team, thank you for your continued service to making our commute safe and sane. I have been balancing my commute between driving to Tysons and taking the train/bus. I would gladly prefer sitting on a train and bus to avoid the crazy drivers and traffic of NoVA. Keep up the great work! BTW the Spotsylvania station is coming along nicely! Looking forward to it opening up.

VRE Management:

Thank you for the nice words. We are also looking forward to getting Spotsy open.

Lori from Manassas Park, VA asks:

Is there any plan to work with MARC to reinstitute the cross-honor? I love taking the MARC but miss it a lot of the time (my VRE train gets to the station at 7:55 or earlier, and the MARC leaves at 8), so it isn't worth paying \$100 a month for a ticket if I only use it twice a week. And how are we going on the idea of electronic TLC fares? I understand Metro will stop selling paper tickets in December because upkeep on the card reader machines is getting too expensive.

VRE Management:

The change in policy was dictated by Maryland's Legislature. We have a plan that will still allow TLC purchases as of January 2016 that will involve using SmartTrip cards.

Hamaad from Manassas, VA asks:

Any plans to add another morning train to the Manassas line? There used to be a 9AM train out of Manassas but was cancelled due to low ridership.

VRE Management:

No plans at this time.

Lori from Manassas Park, VA asks:

Is there any possibility of the Manassas Park station ever expanding to include overhead covers the length of the platform or to include an area inside like Alexandria and Woodbridge have? It would be nice to have an actual station where people could sit on a bench and not get soaked by rain, but Manassas Park station has about six benches and they are mostly out in the open.

VRE Management:

There are no plans that we are currently aware of to make those suggested changes.

VRE Management:

Thanks again for all the great questions!

Remember, we don't operate service on July 3rd in observance of Independence Day.

Limited tickets are still available for Firecracker trains into DC.
We want to wish everybody a safe and happy July 4th!
Rich, Chris, et al.