

Let's Talk!

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



There are currently 25 questions waiting to be answered.

VRE Management:

Thank you for joining us today. Robert Hostelka, our new Director of IT is in the studio today. He has lots of exciting plans for improving our technology for VRE. Speaking of technology, VRE Mobile has gotten off to a fast start – the app has been downloaded over 4,000 times and it has sold over \$100k since launch, so thank you! With that said, we have seen some bugs that we are working out.

We appreciate all the feedback so we can make VRE Mobile even better.

We also wanted to let you know Firecracker Special tickets for July 4th are on sale now at vrespecialevents.org/firecracker-trains.

Get Yours Now!

On to the questions!

Bruce from Spotsylvania, Virginia asks:

What is the latest information for the opening of the Spotsylvania Station?

VRE Management:

The station will open as soon as VRE and Spotsylvania County work is complete which is expected to be later this summer.

Mike from Fredericksburg asks:

When will the new station open

VRE Management:

See previous answer.

Kevin from Stafford asks:

What are you doing about seating on the train

VRE Management:

We will be adding a train this summer on the Fredericksburg line to add capacity.

Kathy from Manassas asks:

I have electronic ticket on my phone. I forgot to validate and when I saw the conductor coming 10 min later I realized and quickly got my ticket validated. If I were caught, would they issue me a summons or allow me to validate and be done with it. IT was an honest mistake.

VRE Management:

Per the code of Virginia, you need to have a valid ticket before boarding the train. If you do not you will be subject to a summons. It is up to a judge to adjudicate the summons.

EI Capitan from ESTACION PERDIDO asks:

Hey the new mobile app is great. But what if we want to sleep on the train. The gung-ho new gal checked out tickets three times on 308 last week. I admire her dedication, but . . .

VRE Management:

You will have to wake up to show the ticket on your phone. We think our conductors are extraordinary but they do not have X-ray vision.

Jennifer from Fredericksburg VA asks:

I would like to know where there is alternative parking for the VRE at Fredericksburg station once the gravel lot is full? You must live in the city proper to get permits to park in the other lots by the train station. And I am tired of people leaving notes on cars when you have to be creative to park in the gravel lot. Please give us some alternative areas. We pay alot of money every month on commuting and now there is no parking. And additionally we are having to make the walk from the lots and in the winter the gravel lot isn't even lit. Thank you Jennifer

VRE Management:

We understand parking is an issue. Hopefully, when the new station opens in Spotsylvania that should and will ease the parking at Fredericksburg. Keep in mind, Fredericksburg is a historic town with a lot of one-way streets making parking all in one lot impossible.

from asks:

On Saturday Norfolk Southern is running a steam excursion leaving Manassas at 8a. And not returning until 1230p. Where will the VRE passengers for thr 10a and 11a Clifton excursions park?

VRE Management:

Parking will be tight this year at the Manassas Rail Festival. If the parking garage is full, try surface parking which is one block from the station or street parking. Also try the lot on Prince William Street. Please arrive early as possible.

David from Manassas, VA asks:

I asked WMATA about the plans for an electronic version of the TLC card, to be linked with a monthly VRE ticket. Do you know how this will be implemented?

VRE Management:

The current plan is the WMATA portion of the TLC will be on a SmartTrip card with an adhesive overlay for the VRE portion. The TLC will only be available through Computer Direct once this is implemented.

Pat from Manassas, VA asks:

MARC will no longer cross-honor VRE tickets. Do you know the date this goes into affect?

VRE Management:

We will continue to honor Marc tickets. We will update our webpage with the details of Marc cross-honor agreement when we confirm them.

Dan from Manassas, VA asks:

Why can't the Fredericksburg afternoon trains coming into L'Enfant stop at a different place than the Manassas train to avoid confusion/crowding/hostilities?

VRE Management:

We have changed the location in the past to correct the issue. We will get with Keolis to make sure all crew members are aware.

Lee from Manassas asks:

Just a couple of suggestions on the Mobile Ticketing. First on the App it would be swell if on the main page there was a My Tickets button. Not that its a huge deal to drill down to it but it takes just that second longer while the Conductor is standing there waiting since they didn't announce they were now checking tickets on this particular walk through. Second, the Conductors should probably announce this so folks can access the app. I'm sure folks use their phones for other things during the ride so it would let us get to the app and be ready to show the ticket.

VRE Management:

Thanks for the suggestion Lee. We're looking for a way to have the App automatically open to an activated ticket to speed up the process. We'll also ask Conductors to announce ticket checks as they enter the cars so everyone has time to bring up their ticket.

Mary from VA asks:

when will new station in Spotsylvania open. What exit should I take coming north from Richmond. Thank

VRE Management:

Summer 2015, Exit 126 to Route 1 South, left on 17, right onto Crossroads Parkway.

Lyla from Manassas asks:

Why are your trains so cold? I wear a jacket year round. I notice I'm not alone. How about a "warm car"?

VRE Management:

The HVAC has been designed to operate between 69 - 72 degrees.

Pam from Fredericksburg asks:

What's the deal with 303? Why haven't you properly fixed the air conditioning? For the amount of money we spend traveling back and forth, we should be able to do so in relative comfort.

VRE Management:

Please provide a car number and the specific issue to gotrains@vre.org and we will address this issue.

Dan from Manassas, VA asks:

When is the date for submitting comments on the Governor's plan for I-66, which could result in VRE receiving much needed funds to spur its Gainesville extension? Where do we send our comments?

VRE Management:

Comments are currently being accepted: outside.transform66.org

Bob from Woodbridge asks:

With all of the focus in the news, does VRE have or plan to have Positive Train Control (PTC)?

VRE Management:

PTC is a mandate. We, like all systems noted in the legislation are implementing this technology. However, please know that PTC is an overlay to many safety systems currently in place.

Dave from Manassas asks:

On Saturday the NS is running a high capacity steam passenger excursion from Manassas at 8:00am...returning at 12:30 pm. Where will the VRE passengers park for the 10:00am, 11:00am. And 1:00pm Clifton excursions?

VRE Management:

There is no doubt this event will be crowded. We recommend you get into town as early as possible to find any available parking.

Dave from Woodbridge, Va asks:

I talked to conductor two weeks ago and he mentioned that the new train on the Fredricksburg line will head north between the 304 and 306 trains. He also mentioned it would head south departing Union Station about 3pm each day. Are these accurate times? What is the starting date for this new train? July?

VRE Management:

Times for the new trains have not been confirmed.

Todd from Burke, VA asks:

Is it possible to ensure that the ticket vending machines always reflect the correct time, and print correctly? I have two receipts that are unreadable and therefore were rejected when I submitted them for Smart Benefits reimbursement.

VRE Management:

We have a regular maintenance program. If you encounter a problem let us know the TVM number. We can get you documentation for your ticket if needed. Contact us at gotrains@vre.org

Concerned from WB asks:

Same Offenders Each day the same people leave the woodbridge station after getting off the 303 train and cross rt.1 to Occoquan Rd in the right lane. Once again I've seen some close calls with accidents. Have you all ever contacted PW County Police so this can be monitored? I'm sure it's very frustrating for the people wanting to turn right in right turn lane only till 5pm but have to wait because of these offenders.

VRE Management:

We are constantly working with our community law enforcement partners. We'll continue to raise this topic and remind all our riders to obey traffic laws.

James from Woodbridge asks:

I tried to talk to your conductor, and he basically ignored me on the trip home the other day. I am a former marine and an Alabama football fan, and I heard him talking sports to another passenger, I think the conductors should be friendly with all passengers, not just the select few they choose to be friendly with. Thank you!

VRE Management:

Unless he is from Auburn we do not understand why he wouldn't be friendly. We will pass this along.

Tim from FBG asks:

Why do you schedule Meet the Management on Wednesdays only? I would bet there are plenty of customers who have a regular telework day of Wednesdays and cannot take part in these events?

VRE Management:

Wednesday is our heaviest ridership day. We regret that we are not able to connect with everyone but we try to be as accessible as possible in other ways, such as forums like this.

Tim from FBG asks:

FBG riders see what looks to be construction of a 3rd rail and we know there will be 2 new stations to service in the coming years...yet we do not hear anything that you are coming up with ideas to avoid making the FBG ride longer when these stations come on line! Talk To Your Customers For Pete's Sake!

VRE Management:

The ride on the Fredericksburg line will not be longer for those who ride from Fredericksburg north with the addition of the Spotsylvania Station. We will consider other operational scenarios once the Potomac Shores open.

Marvin from Fredericksburg, Va asks:

What is the projection for repairing the elevator at the Fransconis/Springfield station? Thanks/M.

VRE Management:

Several months at best. We are working on getting a private transportation service to offer a shuttle, for those who need assistance, between the VRE platform and the Metro station. We will keep you posted and apologize for the inconvenience.

Sarah from Woodbridge asks:

I tried to buy and use the new mobile ticket from my cell phone, but I could not figure out how to print the ticket from my phone? Will I be charged for the ticket if it was not printed?

VRE Management:

Tickets purchased through VRE Mobile are displayed on the phone itself. Please check the "My Tickets" section.

Ross from Burke, VA asks:

Hello - I am a regular rider between Burke Centre and Alexandria. I am a federale and enjoy the transit subsidy. Normally I get the monthly pass, and so am not in the habit of validating with every ride. Last month I was too late in obtaining the monthly pass and so had to get a ten-ride ticket. I remembered to validate nine times, but on the tenth, owing to a combination of unusual circumstances, I simply forgot. I mentioned it to the conductor as soon as I saw her coming - but she was adamant and cited me. My question: isn't there some good faith exception that can be applied here?

VRE Management:

Conductors are required by state law to issue a summons to any passenger on a train without a valid ticket. Issues addressed with the conductor prior to boarding the train allows the conductor to help resolve situations where passengers had difficulty purchasing or validating tickets.

Anonymous from Broad Run, VA asks:

I saw today in the magazine on the train about the new station in Spotsylvania being built. Why is it for years the riders on the Manassas Line have continuously been put off about the

Haymarket/Gainesville Line and yet the Spotsylvania Station seems to be going in over night? Not Fair to your riders that have been wanting the Haymarket/Gainesville extension for a long time.

VRE Management:

Our system development is reliant upon political will, freight railroad capacity, funding and a number of other issues. We are passionate about development but we must navigate many factors in line with a Regional Transit Master Plan.

Debbie from Broad Run, VA asks:

It doesn't seem right that sometimes the train doors are closed early when leaving the Broad Run Station or when the departure time comes even though someone is very close to the train they still close the doors and leave. Last time I checked there were 60 seconds in a minute and a few seconds is all it would have taken for a person to make the train. Have a heart.

VRE Management:

We ask passengers to be on the platform prior to the train arriving the station with their ticket validated. Holding a train for a minute impacts the overall run and inconveniences everyone on the train.

Linda from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

Is it possible to add/include the actual time and date in the corner of the TV screen? I often do not have a watch on or have my phone on and it would be nice to know the time and date.

VRE Management:

We are currently working on a project to update our on platform information displays and will consider adding time and date to the new system.

Booby from Brooke asks:

Can you explain/discuss all that is involved/takes place as a train approaches a station...stops...passengers board...then leaves the station? not taking into account passenger boarding/deboarding...why do trains spend different amounts of time at different stations?

VRE Management:

It depends on many variables including passenger loads, passengers that may need assistance, receiving clear signals from the dispatcher and the train may hold if it arrives at a station early.

Ricky from Rippon asks:

How often do crews change? Monthly?

VRE Management:

Crews have the opportunity to bid shifts every 30 days.

gigi from Fredericksburg asks:

Why oh why does your cost go up every single year?

VRE Management:

Our last fare increase was July 2013.

Dave from Springfield, VA asks:

Will we ever see the Lorton platform extension?

VRE Management:

Yes, however we do not have an estimated date.

Dan from Haymarket, VA asks:

I see what looks like a tablet in the engineer's compartment. Is the engineer connected to the internet?

VRE Management:

No, the control console has a digital readout for operational items such as speed, amperage, etc.

Betty from Manassas asks:

Does VRE utilize the PTC (positive train control) on your trains? I realize that our locomotives are new and will have more up to date safety measures that Amtrak did not but...I know the automatic locking

brakes to prevent run-a-way trains work well but what other safety nets does VRE have in place to prevent what happened in New Jersey? If VRE has PTC does VRE utilize the "track signals" or "radios" method? I know that VRE takes safety as top priority so I know this must have been addressed by VRE.

VRE Management:

PTC is an overlay to many systems we presently employ. Wayside signals, cab signals, speed controls and rapid communications are all in place right now.

Valerie S from VA asks:

There are many folks with disabilities requiring extra assistance to reach the VRE stop at L'enfant from six Street. they have to hobble or wheelchair it to the other side to get the ramp. There should be an escalator or an elevator to make it more convenient for persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities have to either get off early or work later to allow time to hobble or wheelchair it a block away to the other side. Is there plans to put in an escalator or an elevator for those persons with disabilities at the l'enfant stop, on both sides, to include the side with the ramp.

VRE Management:

There are no immediate plans.

Bobbi from Manassas Park, VA asks:

I love the new benches that have been placed on numerous platforms. I really appreciate that the VRE not only replaced some of the old benches but installed more benches. Thank you for the new benches!

VRE Management:

Thanks for the compliment.

Shawn from Rippon asks:

I would like to use the new ticket app but am confused. I currently use commuterdirect. All of the instructions that I see indicate Smart benefits. So, how do I make the change from commuter direct to Smart benefits?

VRE Management:

We will be holding Meet the Management at the Franconia/Springfield station today. Please stop by and see Jeremy. He will be happy to assist you. If you are unable to attend, please call 1-844-353-3408 for assistance.

chirag from clifton asks:

I have noticed that the train speeds up before going over the bridge between rolling road and backlick road. Is there a particular reason?

VRE Management:

This has more to do with signals and changes to authorized speed.

Mike from Manassas, VA asks:

The new mobile app is awesome but improvements are needed. first, the instructions to purchase ticket with smart trip benefit is not clear (when to disconnect benefit from commuter direct). Second, for the trip tools, just link to vre website is not much of help. you should have a build-in schedule, etc.

VRE Management:

In phase 2 of the project we will be adding a trip planner and other enhancements.

Matt from Woodbridge, VA asks:

VRE keeps saying a bill is pending to increase transit benefits from \$130 to \$230. So, why hasn't Congress passed it?

VRE Management:

Two bills are pending to raise the commuter benefit. Typically this bill is passed as part of a tax extenders bill which has not yet been considered.

Wes from Manassas, VA asks:

What is the possibility of finding a way to speed up the trip between the district and "L" stations on the evening runs? It appears we can always get there on time in the morning, but seldom arrive at Zone

6+ stations on the return trip as scheduled.

VRE Management:

Train traffic is heavier in the afternoons and lately we have been subject to heat restrictions.

Raif from Lorton, VA. asks:

What happened to the Lorton stop on the Firecracker Run?

VRE Management:

We are trying to decrease the total trip time. We hope you will consider Woodbridge or Backlick as alternative stations.

Janet from Lorton asks:

Are Metrobus drivers currently accepting VRE Mobile tickets for free transfer to Metrobuses?

VRE Management:

All non express Metrobus routes will accept VRE tickets through the mobile app.

VRE Management:

That hour flew by! If you didn't get your question answered please submit it to Gotrains@vre.org

As always, safety is critically important. For those planning on attending Manassas Rail Festival - remember to stay off the tracks. On this note, we are beginning our summer long crossing safety blitz events in partnership with CSX, Norfolk Southern, and Operation Lifesaver. For more information visit www.oli.org

And for the best ride into Dc on July 4th go to vrespecialevents.org/firecracker-trains to get your tickets now.

See you next month

Rich, Chris, et al.