

Let's Talk!

The next VRE online forum will start on Wednesday, May 6th at 12:00pm. Click on the "VRE" Button below to submit a question.



There are currently 15 questions waiting to be answered.

VRE Management:

Thank you for your participation in filling out the Customer Service Survey this morning. We use your feedback to improve VRE service. Look for the results at the end of summer. VRE Mobile will go live May 15, 2015 as a more convenient way to purchase and validate your tickets. We will be demonstrating the app at Meet the Management and other stations.

Special guests in the studio today are Brian Barton – Trainmaster CSX, Gregg Baxter – General Manager Keolis, Jamie Stump – Transportation Manager Keolis

Now on to the Questions!

Fuming from Falmouth asks:

Is there a problem with maintenance now? Train 303 sat at Brooke for 20 minutes while the conductor tried to fix the wheelchair lift. What is the problem? We can't depend on VRE for anything time sensitive because of maintenance issues. I missed a doctor's appointment because of this 20-minute delay. Can you do better in the future?

VRE Management:

We do preventive measure to reduce the number of maintenance issues even though they happen from time to time.

Armando from Spotsy asks:

Call me skeptical about the Spotsy station. Since you're 2 years behind schedule. But you have the Amtrak step-up almost doubling in July. A) The increase should only go into effect after the Spotsy station opens, and B) Why don't you make Amtrak waive the step up when they are (always, chronically) more than half an hour late? Also I should just throw in something crazy, since you won't print this anyway.

VRE Management:

We understand your skepticism, we are closer now than two years ago and still plan to open Summer 2015. We cannot guarantee Amtrak's on-time performance

Mike from Manassas VA asks:

Every time when i am able to board the train at L'Enfant Plaza, there is something smells really bad, like dead animal. I am not so sure if its from the train or the station buy can you please have someone take a look into this issue?

VRE Management:

We will have our facilities manager look into this.

MB from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

Do you have any updated information regarding the status of the new Spotsylvania station opening/train schedule/fares? Many of us are frustrated with the bus service and are eager to ride VRE. Thank you.

VRE Management:

The projected opening is still summer 2015

Sarah from Fairfax, Va asks:

Are there any plans to improve the speakers on the trains? Whenever the conductors make announcements, it is very difficult to hear what is being said because the volume is so low.

VRE Management:

Report train and car number to gotrains@vre.org and we will look into it.

Kevin from stafford asks:

when will there be more seating? i didn't pay to stand up on the train.

VRE Management:

We plan to add an additional north and south bound train to the Fredericksburg line which will add more seating.

Robin from Manassas Park/Catlett asks:

There has been so much talk of a Haymarket Station. Logically speaking, expanding the Manassas line out to Nokesville, Catlett, Bealton (and maybe eventually Culpeper) would seem to me to be a better bargain for VRE. Has VRE totally given up any thoughts of approaching Fauquier County to gain jurisdiction to providing service in that county?

VRE Management:

We are presently conducting planning and environmental studies through 2017 with final design and construction through 2021. We anticipate Gainesville/Haymarket initiation of service 2022

Sarah from Woodbridge VA asks:

Almost every single day while waiting to catch one of the VRE trains home in the afternoon, early evenings at Union Station, we have to watch out the windows to guess which track the train will arrive on, then rush down to meet it. Why can't you tell us which track it will come in on? Why is MARC so much better at knowing which tracks they will pick up their passengers on?

VRE Management:

We are working with Amtrak to get more personnel to help with customer service issues at Union Station. Look for improvements soon.

Bob from Woodville, VA asks:

Trains leaving Union Station seem to be posted in a timely fashion, and at their position at least a few minutes before departure time. Congratulations!

VRE Management:

Please see previously answered question

Dave from Woodbridge, Va asks:

As mentioned in previous online forum's there is going to be an additional Fredricksburg train added in July. Can you please post the schedule of that train? We are less than two months away.

VRE Management:

We are working with CSX to get the final approval on the schedule, when we do we will notify our passengers.

Belza from Haymarket asks:

Any planned maintenance for bridge between VA and DC or tunnel into Union Station? If so, how will these impact VRE riders?

VRE Management:

Periodic maintenance occurs frequently and CSX always works to minimize impact to VRE service. For more information on the bridge visit: <http://longbridgeproject.com/>

Bob from Woodbridge asks:

Two items: 1. glad to see the survey handed out this morning but it would help to announce before hand so some of us would know to have a pencil. 2. Although the temperature has risen, it does not seem high enough for heat restrictions. Why are they being imposed?

VRE Management:

Heat restrictions are based upon temperature swings, not simply high temperatures alone. We did have survey workers handing out pencils on every train, sorry you didn't see them.

J.T. from Broad Run asks:

Please look in to the traffic flow in and around the broad run parking lots. While there is a small group of aggressive drivers, most are courteous and patient. However, the lack of markings and signage is making for inefficient flow of traffic. It now takes longer to get out of the parking lot than it does to get through the traffic signal on Piper. Thanks!

VRE Management:

We are working with VDOT and Prince William County on this issue.

Happy Happy from The Burg asks:

I don't have a question but I do have KUDO's for Tony Arthur the conductor on Fred line #306 in the AM. My cell phone hopped out of my bag and onto my seat one morning and I did not realize it until I got to work. Of course I was in a panic and filed a Lost report, and hoped someone turned it in. Well no one turned it in. Tony saw my phone on my seat after I got off and safe guarded it until the following morning. When he saw me he handed me my phone with a big smile on his face and I did not even have to say a word he knew that the phone was mine. A big thanks for a job well done Tony!!

VRE Management:

Thanks for the compliment. We will be sure to pass this along to Mr. Arthur's supervisor.

Mike from Manassas VA asks:

How often does the train gets seat cleaning?

VRE Management:

The train is cleaned nightly

Gloria from Springfield, VA asks:

Can anything be done about the homeless people who stand outside and on the station (L'Enfant) steps asking for handouts? It is the same people everyday.

VRE Management:

We have worked to address this on many occasions, however we find it challenging as this is tough to Police. We must remind our passengers to direct contributions to homeless shelters

Gloria from Springfield, VA asks:

Can anything be done about the cleanliness of the sidewalk under the bridge at L'Enfant station? It appears that the birds and the homeless people contribute to the filth.

VRE Management:

We will contact the city's Public Works department.

robert from potomac shores asks:

is 2017 realistic for the Potomac Shores station to open. No offense, but givent he long list of projects that CSX is requiring prior to opening it, it seems like time is running short. I would only use the Spotsy station as and example of a project that has dragged on much longer than originally planned.

VRE Management:

2017 is still the projected time frame for the Potomac Shores station to open. Once a project has been approved and work begins there are other factors that may extend over what has been projected initially.

History/Queuing Issue from Manassas/Fredericksburg asks:

Thank you first off for the opportunity to correspond on a monthly basis. The riders do appreciate this opportunity. I noticed last month's forum that some of the riders continue to queue in the isle and will not listen to the conductors announcements. This was an issue when Amtrak was running the VRE trains as well. They simply refused to leave the station unless everybody was seated. It was like musical chairs and it was effective. Just my humble opinion.

VRE Management:

Thank you for the suggestion we will continue to work with our crews on this challenging issue.

devin from chesapeake asks:

Why do trains get put on restrictions for no reason

VRE Management:

Operating trains is based upon safety and network performance. Restrictions, when put into effect have important reasons.

Mo from Haymarket asks:

Queueing is supposed to be a no-no, but none of the conductors seem to enforce the no-queueing policy. Why? We all want to get home as quickly (and safely) as possible, but all queueing does is slow the rest of us down (not to mention it's rude and annoying). It also perpetuates the unsafe behavior that is rampant on the Manassas line - everyone is in such a rush to get off the train and to their cars that they step on people, push people, and I have almost been hit in the parking lot more times than I care to count. When is VRE going to act as if safety is a concern rather than saying it?

VRE Management:

Queueing is not a safety issue we, however we will continue to work with our crews on this challenging issue.

Peter from Haymarket asks:

When are you expanding to the Gainesville/Haymarket area? It sucks having to drive 25 minutes just to get to Broad Run. That time would be better spent on the train!

VRE Management:

We are presently conducting planning and environmental studies through 2017 with final design and construction through 2021. We anticipate Gainesville/Haymarket initiation of service 2022

Mike from Lorton asks:

Just curious, what are the metal lock boxes recently installed on the platforms for?

VRE Management:

These will be used to support station operations.

James Robert Hensley from Virginia asks:

Is there any plan to to expand to Warrenton and Front Royal ? What would be the station ? Is there any plan to update stations?

VRE Management:

At this time we do not have plans to expand to Warrenton or Front Royal

Concerned Rider from Manassas Line asks:

For years now when VRE Personnel are questioned about when the Haymarket/Gainesville Station will be built your riders have always received the response "We are conducting feasibility studies." Well how long does it take to run this study? You know how much your riders want this, so why does VRE keep putting us off with the lame answers. Fredericksburg line got a new station very quickly, why can't we? Please be honest with us about this.

VRE Management:

We are presently conducting planning and environmental studies through 2017 with final design and construction through 2021. We anticipate Gainesville/Haymarket initiation of service 2022

Gary from Alexandria, VA asks:

What's the point of having public hearing's on fair rates when it does no good? I understand VRE wants to provide a platform for people to voice their opinions, but in the end it doesn't seem to matter. VRE ends up raising rates anyway... Seems like a joke.

VRE Management:

We are obligated to have public hearings. We have in the past made changes based on feedback from the public hearings.

Todd from Burke, VA asks:

Is it possible to have the current, correct, time prominently displayed on all video boards at all stations at all times? Perhaps it can be superimposed in the top right corner of the screen?

VRE Management:

We are currently working on a project to enhance screen capabilities, that will be one of the upgrades considered.

Jason from Manassas Park asks:

CSX just installed new track near the L'Enfant Station. What is the purpose of this track? Could this be used for additional train storage in the future?

VRE Management:

These tracks are going to be used to support CSX expansion, for more information go to nationalgateway.org.

Brian from Fredericksburg asks:

When will the old cars be decommissioned and replaced?

VRE Management:

As soon as new cars can be placed into service. We expect new cars February 2016.

John from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

I read the NVTA funded second platforms for Springfield and Rippon, which I believe were the final two stations that needed funding for double platforms along the whole Fredericksburg Line. Are they all going to be constructed at the same time? Will there be delays during construction?

VRE Management:

We do not envision construction at the same time. Train operations will not be delayed and construction will be phased according to funding availability. We are looking at multiple station expansions due to third tracking and VRE service expansions.

Mark from Burke, VA asks:

When will the VRE Mobile Ticketing App be available for Blackberry?

VRE Management:

Blackberry is scheduled to be available during phase 2 of our project. We will keep you updated as to when that will be.

Eva from Lorton, VA asks:

When will the Lorton Station platform extension occur? We were told last year that a contract was awarded, but there was never any start to it. Also, there is a severe crack in the concrete on the far south end of the platform that is dangerous and needs to be fixed.

VRE Management:

The Lorton Platform extension contract is on hold as we examine options to incorporate CSX third track concepts in the corridor to make all 3 tracks accessible.

Marc from Leeland asks:

Could you please explain the new ticket a little more. Is it only good for one day; up and back? If you go north on Monday and travel, can you use the ticket to come home Tuesday?

VRE Management:

The ticket is only good for the day you validate the ticket. If you need to go north on Monday and come back on Tuesday you would need to purchase two 1 ride tickets.

Deanna from Leeland Road asks:

In lieu of running an earlier VRE train, why can't you coordinate with AMTRAK to allow step up tickets on the #79 Carolinian train that departs Union Station at 10:53 a.m.

VRE Management:

Amtrak allows us to utilize certain trains due to the availability of seats on those trains.

David from Manassas asks:

What happened to the email updates last night? Only emails were in regard to train 329 issues. There was no emails about the Union Station power outage? and signal issues? Recordings at the stations

were wrong, and the app wasn't being updated either.

VRE Management:

Messages were sent out last night concerning all delays. We can look into what your subscriptions are on Train Talk to ensure that you are signed up to receive all information pertinent to your type. We had a rider yesterday that was only receiving certain information due to not being subscribed to receive alerts at that particular station. If you email us at gotrains@vre.org with the email(s) you use we can update that information for you.

Davin from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Will your new mobile app work with commuterdirect.com? I purchase my tickets at commuterdirect.com. I have 2013 Nexus 7 Wi-Fi only tablet and since VRE doesn't have Wi-Fi I can't go online on the train

VRE Management:

No, it will not. Although you can allocate your SmartBenefits towards VRE Mobile to use in the app. Stay tuned to vre.org/mobile for more details. To use the App you only need internet connection to purchase the ticket, not to validate and show.

Davin from Woodbridge, VA asks:

When VRE updates it schedule this summer with the new train, will VRE adjust it so that Fredericksburg trains don't get stuck following Manassas trains from Alexandria to DC? It happens to frequently in the mornings.

VRE Management:

Yes, we will work on improving the schedule between trains.

David from Manassas asks:

In this mornings survey, you asked about the Daily Downloads for delays?...I used to get these 2 years ago, but they no longer appear. Checked the VRE Facebook page, and couldn't find one being posted there either?

VRE Management:

The Daily Downloads are listed on our website at vre.org under service information.

Davin from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Prince William Co has started widening Route 1 south of Featherstone/Rippon and after they finish this summer they will move further north towards Woodbridge. How will this affect the VRE Woodbridge station?

VRE Management:

The kiss and ride will be affected.

Davin from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Why is CSX issuing heat restrictions at 80 degrees? It's not that hot and it's not summer yet. I though the threshold was 90 degrees. No other railroad is issuing heat restrictions, so CSX has got to stop doing this and let VRE trains operate at full speed.

VRE Management:

Heat Orders are imposed not only for ambient temperature but also for the differential in temperature over a 24 hour period.

Brian from Stafford asks:

When the new mobile app comes out and has our ticket on it, how will the conductors check it? Will they wake people up who are sleeping to turn the app on?

VRE Management:

When asked, you will present your ticket on your phone. If you are sleeping you will have to wake up and show your ticket.

Dave from Springfield asks:

Why no email notices about the power outage at Union Station yesterday?

VRE Management:

We did send out Train Talk messages, please contact us to check your subscription settings.

John from Fredericksburg asks:

Is there any way you can answer the most common comments (wifi, Spotsylvania, ect..) at the beginning of the forum and the ignore those questions when asked, so we can get other questions answered?

VRE Management:

We are working to create an online forum FAQ.

Diana from Lorton, VA asks:

Why are service updates not provided in real time? Are there any plans to provide real time service information at the platforms?

VRE Management:

We send out Train Talks as close to real time as possible.

Robert from Fredericksburg asks:

There is a conductor #307 (Tony) that everyday stands in the door way of the car just north of the quite car chatting with passengers from Woodbridge to at least Leeland blocking the doors open. There is no problem with the chatting but would it be possible to request that the vestibule doors be allowed to close? For about three months, he was not on 307 this problem did not exist. Now that he has returned, the problem has returned. Other passengers have made comments and requests to allow the doors to close all to no avail.

VRE Management:

Thank you for the feedback, we will address it.

Dave from Woodbridge, Va asks:

Will you all be adding any additional cares to the 300 Express in the near future?

VRE Management:

No plans at this time.

Lee from Kingstowne, va asks:

Why is fredericksburg line 306 in the morning consistently held behind the Manassas line train when approaching Alexandria and Crystal City?

VRE Management:

The Manassas train is scheduled first, we are working to improve the scheduling between trains.

Kenny M from Warrenton Bluffs, VA asks:

Self policing request; Can the individual feeding the birds at L'Enfant (324 morning train from Manassas) cease and desist feeding these pests! Have been soiled on repeatedly, it isn't a good practice to bait these birds into the station. They become lazy and dependent on being feed. Also, some one needs to clean up the feces! Please stop...

VRE Management:

Courtesy Reminder from a fellow passenger.

Connie from Dumfries, VA asks:

Have you heard anything about Transit subsidy benefits going to be raised to \$245? Metro didn't increase their fares -- why can't VRE think about raising fares every other year instead of every year? just a thought.

VRE Management:

We continually work with Members of Congress to increase commuter benefits and two bills are pending to do just that. VRE last raised its fares July 2013.

Dave from Hayes, VA asks:

This is more of a "check the facts" for some riders. For Amtrak they were late about 30% of the time last month and are late about 25% of the time. While we would like them to perform at 100% that is not always feasible till the 3rd rail is complete. As far as seating I make it a point to walk to the rear of

the train when I get on then depending on where I am getting off that day I walk to the car I want to exit from just before my stop. I almost always have a seat on the upper deck when I do this and there is always plenty of seats. More riders need to do this and it should be enforced.

VRE Management:

Thanks Dave we appreciate your comment.

Martin from Fredericksburg VA asks:

I left my iPad on train 307 on a Friday afternoon by mistake. I realized it when I got home and immediately filled out a lost item form. As I was the last person off the car at the last stop on a Friday, I was confident it would be found by an employee and returned. I waited 48 hours and heard nothing. On Wednesday, I spoke with a conductor about it and he said I had to call VRE (even though the form guaranteed a call within 48 hours). I sent another form and finally got a reply saying no one had seen it. I am frustrated by the mixed messages I received, and the failure to contact me.

VRE Management:

You can contact Brenda Thompson at 703-684-1001 directly to explain what is going on with your lost item.

VRE Management:

We wish all Mothers a Happy Mother's Day!

Thanks for all the questions. If you didn't get your questions answered please send them to gotrains@vre.org

We will see you all at Quantico and L'Enfant next week

Safety Tip: Please remember at Union Station you are not to cross the tracks to avoid the lines on the stairs. For that matter, do not cross the tracks at any station in an unauthorized manner.

Jeremy, Brian, Gregg, Jamie et al.