

The next VRE online forum will start on Wednesday, November 4th at 12:00pm. Click on the "VRE" Button below to submit a question.



There are currently 12 questions waiting to be answered.

VRE Management:

Welcome to another edition of the online forum. This is our monthly chat with you, the passengers, and VRE Management, which includes Rich Dalton-Deputy CEO/COO and Chris Henry – Director of Rail Operations, and other staff members.

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Since we are on the topic of new service, Christine Hoeffner, VRE's Manager of Project Development, is also in the studio ready to answer your questions on the Gainesville-Haymarket Expansion #VREGHX. Take a quick look at www.vre.org/ghx to see about how to get involved in this project. You can also attend public meetings to voice your comments or by emailing ghx@vre.org.

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With that said, on to the questions!

Mark from Manassas Park asks:

Will the Gainesville-Haymarket extension have the same issues with Norfolk Southern that the Charlotte NC Red Line commuter rail project is having?

VRE Management:

VRE has an established relationship with Norfolk Southern and works closely with them on day-to-day operations, special events and service initiatives. VRE is working with NS to identify railroad requirements for the GHX to develop a viable project and gain their eventual approval regarding joint use of the B Line.

John from Manassas asks:

What is the status of the Long Bridge NEPA study? When will it be completed?

VRE Management:

VRE is currently collaborating with CSX, DDOT, DRPT and FRA on pre-NEPA activities for Long Bridge. The NEPA portion is anticipated to start in late 2016 and be completed within two years.

Sam from Fredericksburg asks:

Can you please clean the outside of the windows on the upper level of the older model railcars? Most of them are so mucked up its impossible to see out of them.

VRE Management:

All equipment goes through a train wash on average every ten days. Windows are cleaned more frequently but we will pay particular attention to the legacy cars.

Woody from Woodbridge asks:

Another month goes by with more near misses on Route1 and Dawson Beach after 303 arrives in Woodbridge. The right lane does NOT proceed across Route 1until after 5pm but riders continue to cross from that lane. Prince William County could make a fortune in fines if they police the intersection and more importantly avoid a crash. What can you do about this????

VRE Management:

We will continue to share this concern with the Prince William County police department.

Karen from Triangle, VA asks:

Is there any way to improve 308 on time arrival? It is usually stuck behind the Manassas train, especially during leaf season. Perhaps let the Fred line go first rather than let both lines be late?

VRE Management:

Our schedules will be adjusted when we add the new Fredericksburg line train by the end of the year. We hope the new schedule will eliminate any conflict between scheduled times for both lines.

Daniel from Woodbridge, VA asks:

If there is presently WiFi on Amtrak trains that operate on the Fredericksburg line train tracks, then why isn't WiFi available on VRE trains operating on that same track? Thanks.

VRE Management:

Amtrak experiences the same issues with connectivity in this area that is the basis of our concern. We continue to be hesitant to offer an amenity we know will not work to your satisfaction.

Bob from Burke asks:

For over a year I have been asking about the creaking and moaning coaches, or should we say "stagecoaches." It is systemic throughout the fleet except for your newly delivered coaches. The conductors know about it and say they report it. For the last year I have received various responses via emails and this forum. Your answers have been: the coaches will be fixed on their normal maintenance schedule, send us the specific coaches with problems and we will address it, it is not a safety issue so don't worry, or we are aware of the issue with. So a year later nothing has been done. Really?

VRE Management:

The coaches will make some noise. This does not indicate an issue with maintenance or safety. If there are specific coaches you would like us to check out, please forward that information to Gotrains@vre.org.

Confused from Falmouth, Virginia asks:

Now that we ride the train in the dark morning and night, how about updating the feckless station signage so one knows where one is since the garbled and indistinguishable PA announcement is a failure. The only person who knows where he is is someone on the platform side sitting upstairs. Tired of such otiose communication.

VRE Management:

We will look into the PA announcement issue on the trains.

Christine from Stafford, VA asks:

Can you please provide more information regarding the #310 delay on 10/9/15 due to an "unruly passenger." Usually, VRE is forthcoming with details related to the delay. Can you share what issued occurred with this passenger?

VRE Management:

An individual held the train doors open which is a safety violation. As a result, the individual was asked to detrain but refused. Law enforcement was called.

Christine from Stafford, VA asks:

I'm curious what tools the engineer uses to stop the train in the correct spot on each platform. Sometimes s/he overshoots the mark so I am wondering how he knows where to stop.

VRE Management:

Engineers use visual cues to determine the stopping point.

John from Fredericksburg VA asks:

What is the time line for the positive control rail system that will also bring Wi-fi to the VRE?

VRE Management:

We plan to have PTC by the end of 2018.

John from Fredericksburg VA asks:

When was the last time the tracks were checked at the bridge just before (north) the Woodbridge station? It is a rough transition from the rails to the bridge!

VRE Management:

The tracks are inspected regularly according to federal standards.

Jean from Fredericksburg VA asks:

Can you please confirm that the trains will start running from the Spotsylvania station on 11/16?

VRE Management:

Yes, we are scheduled to begin service out of Spotsylvania. See http://www.vre.org/vre_fred_schedule_effective_2015_11_16.pdf

Dave from Woodbridge asks:

When will the extra train be added to the Fredricksburg line? More important, what will its new added departure be? Conductors have mentioned it would be between 2:30-3:00pm each day.

VRE Management:

The new Fredericksburg line train will begin operation by the end of the year. We will release the new schedule as soon as it is confirmed

Andrew from Manassas asks:

Is there anyway you can get the smokers to move at the broad run station? Currently, they stand right next to the main entrance for the platform and we all must walk through their cancer cloud to get on the train.

VRE Management:

Courtesy Reminder.

marcus from FREDERICKSBURG asks:

when will the new train come online for the fredericksburg line

VRE Management:

Previously answered question.

Laura from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Quite a few times passengers have asked management at VRE about assigning someone from VRE to Union Station in the afternoon and evenings to help us discover which track/platform the train will arrive on. A couple of times VRE has stated that they are working on this problem. How long does someone claim to work on an ongoing unsolved problem before admitting they are a failure? Many passengers believe VRE is simply giving us the "fluff job". Amtrak knows where to direct their passengers, MARC knows how to direct their passengers, VRE is consistently self-customer service for the passengers

VRE Management:

We continue to work with Amtrak on this. They are currently going through their hiring process to make sure VRE gets the right person.

Jamison from Alexandria, VA asks:

Why aren't tickets checked at all stations? If they aren't checked, what is the policy if Transshare benefits that are in a state of review?

VRE Management:

Tickets are checked on the train by the Conductors. While we try for a 100% fare inspection, the Conductors have other duties that may take precedence.

George from Broad Run asks:

I do not mean to be rude but would you please consider asking the conductor who usually makes the announcements on Manassas 327 to decrease her verbiage and repeat herself less during each announcement? On most of the trains the conductors take a minimalist approach to making their announcements and the same approach on this train would be greatly appreciated. Thank you much.

VRE Management:

We will pass this on to Keolis.

David from Spotsytucky asks:

Hello. Do you intend to revisit the number of parking lots/spaces in Fredericksburg once the Spotsy station opens? Thanks.

VRE Management:

We will continue to monitor parking capacity and future needs in Fredericksburg and other areas.

Cal from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Will the VRE add more passenger cars to the Fredericksburg Line after the Spotsylvania station opens on November 16th? As of now the 300, 302, and 304 have limited seating upon arrival at the Woodbridge station. This new train station will most likely increase ridership for the VRE Fredericksburg Line.

VRE Management:

We will add a new train on the Fredericksburg line by the end of the year. We do not anticipate lengthening any trains at this time.

Tim from Manassas, VA asks:

Why is MNS326 consistently late into Crystal City? What's the reasoning for the recent "safety inspections" for MNS326 between Alexandria and Crystal City that seems to compound the late issue? You risk losing riders if this is not corrected.

VRE Management:

This is more of a scheduling issue. We anticipate the new schedule will alleviate this issue.

John from Fburg asks:

Why are the recycle bins at L'Enfant "Newspaper only?" I see people, including myself, throwing bottles and glass into the trash. Are these cans owned by VRE? Can we get full recycle bins?

VRE Management:

The garbage is processed off site and recyclables are separated.

Kevin Winski from Stafford VA asks:

Why is it that almost everyday lately the 306 train has to sit and wait, let pass or slow to a stop for the Manassas 326 train? It is ridiculous that we cannot be on time in the mornings due to the all mighty Manassas line.

VRE Management:

See previously answered question.

Big D from WB asks:

When the additional station is added in a few weeks will there be an additional car added to the 300 train? Over the past two months it has been very crowded and it's hard to find a seat. An extra car would go a long way especially with the potential for new riders in the future.

VRE Management:

See previously answered question.

W from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Is it possible to ask the conductors to not use their clicking device to count inside the quiet car? Its slightly annoying.

VRE Management:

No. Conductors still have to do their duties even in the Quiet car.

Pete from Partlow, VA asks:

When (a date and a time)does the Spotsy Station begin service; ie trains picking up and dropping off passengers at the new station?

VRE Management:

The Spotsylvania station will open on November 16th.

Andrew from Bristow VA asks:

Can food vendors provide fast morning coffee and sandwiches in the parking area which does not affect travelers or cars? If so where can a vendor apply for a written consent? Broad Run has Don's Depot which is a double axle trailer that provides coffee, donuts and other small edible items as well as tickets. However, since tickets can be obtained by use of cells now my question is how to obtain written permission for Haymarket, Bristow, Quantico areas.

VRE Management:

These are approved on a case by case basis by the individual city or county in which the station is located.

SS from Manassas asks:

While the extension of the Manassas line is exciting, sometimes there are not enough seats as it is now. What is being done to look into how a new station will impact the current riders and their ability to find a place to sit down during the commute? Thank you.

VRE Management:

The GHX study will look not only at ridership for the extension but also at the effect of the extension on overall Manassas line ridership.

Danny from Manassas, VA asks:

Why can't you ELIMINATE smoking on the platforms? You certainly don't a diatribe on the health effects. It seems to me you're setting yourself up for a potential liability law suit by allowing it.

VRE Management:

We will revisit this with our Operations Board and report back to you.

Sara from Woodbridge, VA asks:

I have a small complaint which I would like addressed. It would seem that the trains do not stop for the same amount of allotted time at each station to allow for riders to get off the train. Could you please have a system in place which would time the conductors evenly and fairly give everyone the same time to exit the train(s)? Also one of your conductors is very handsome, he knows who he is! Thank you!

VRE Management:

There is no standard dwell time. Dwell times can be affected by a multitude of variables. Our priority is to give you sufficient time to de-board safely.

Steve from Burke, VA asks:

Lately on the Manassas line, I have noticed people taking their shoes off and putting their bare feet on the seats. It disgusts me. Can VRE do anything about this?

VRE Management:

Courtesy Reminder.

David from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Are the outside doors of the railcars designed to work like elevator doors? The other day I saw a woman jump on a Manassas train as the doors were closing causing the doors to retract.

VRE Management:

Yes they are similar to elevator doors.

David from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Why does Train #306 have to be delayed for late Train #326. I hate that. We shouldn't have to hold for Train #326 and then creep up tracks making us late. Let us go in front of it or go the same fast speed and stop directly behind it. Train #326 delays Train #306 to frequently.

VRE Management:

See previously answered question.

David from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Why is there no Track #1 where there are only 2 tracks, which are named Track #2 and #3?

VRE Management:

There is a Track # 1 in some locations but it does not continue throughout the entire service area.

FredGirl from Fredericksburg VA asks:

Will there be another earlier afternoon train added once Spotsylvania opens? Right now it's still 107 then jumps to 350.

VRE Management:

The new train is planned to depart Union Station at 3:10pm pending final approval.

Scott from Woodbridge asks:

With the opening of the Spotsylvania station will the 300 express train have an additional car? We're already standing or sitting on steps when we board at Woodbridge. How will the additional riders be handled???

VRE Management:

We ride Train 300 nearly everyday and there are seats available at the North end of the train. If you are standing or sitting on stairs, you will need to walk through the train.

Brandon from Bristow asks:

Would you consider posting more visible signs on the quiet car that review the rules of the car? I think there's been an uptick recently in people getting on the quiet car and engaging in loud conversation. My guess is they don't realize they're on the quiet car because the signage isn't very noticeable.

VRE Management:

We have no plans to add additional signage to the Quiet cars.

David from Woodbridge, VA asks:

I'm glad Congress passed the PTC extension, but what about passing the bill to bring back Transit Subsidy to \$250. One reason people stop riding public transit is because of the lower subsidy. This needs to be passed ASAP

VRE Management:

The commuter benefit is an amendment being considered in the House Transportation Reauthorization Bill. It may also be considered as part of other legislation. We continue to work with our Congressional delegation on this issue.

Zed from manassas asks:

what is the basic plan behind the haymarket line? a shuttle service connecting with manassas line trains or a separate line that will alternate with manassas trains and later fred-line trains?

VRE Management:

The service plan for future GHX service will be developed as part of the study. We would like public input on possible service options. Please consider attending the November 10th GHX Community meeting from 6pm-8pm at Gainesville Middle School or provide input online at www.vre.org/GHX.

William from Spotsylvania, VA asks:

What zone will the new Spotsy station be in?

VRE Management:

Zone 9

Barb from Woodbridge asks:

VERY dismayed to read there are no plans to add additional cars with the addition of the Spotsy station. Those of us that board at Woodbridge already have trouble finding seats without the additional riders. People are already standing in the aisles and sitting in the stairwells. Why won't you add additional cars???????

VRE Management:

We are adding a train to the Fredericksburg line to help accommodate ridership. We do not have the additional equipment or storage to lengthen existing trains.

Mike from Woodbridge asks:

Are there any plans to add/extend a shelter on the south end of the Woodbridge platform?

VRE Management:

We have no plans at this time.

VRE Management:

Because of all the great questions, that hour flew by! As a reminder, we are not operating VRE service on Veterans Day, November 11, 2015. Please check with Amtrak @ (1-800-USA-RAIL) if VRE step-up tickets will be honored that day.

Operation Lifesaver Santa Train tickets will go on sale November 23, 2015 at 9am. As always, we expect these tickets to go very quickly. Please check our website to check for sales location details.

Visit the website at www.vre.org.

Speaking of websites, VRE will be launching a newly designed website this month. Stay tuned to Train Talk for more information.

Join us on November 10th between 6pm-8pm at Gainesville Middle School to learn more about the GHX study.

We have been lucky to enjoy an Indian summer lately but now that we've set our clocks back, we will be dealing with dark, damp and cold weather for the entirety of most of our commutes until spring. This is the time of year when it is more important than ever to be aware of your surroundings, dress warmly and use three points of contact when using the stairs at stations and on trains and when walking through cars to find a seat. Having that extra point (a hand and two feet or two hands and one foot) of contact will prevent unnecessary slips, trips and falls in the event of unexpected movement or a loss of footing.

Safe travels,

See Tracks. Think Train! Rich, Chris, et al.

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