

## Let's Talk!

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The next VRE online forum will start on Wednesday, September 2nd at 12:00pm. Click on the "VRE" Button below to submit a question.



There are currently 18 questions waiting to be answered.

### **VRE Management:**

Welcome to another edition of the monthly on-line forum. We know lots of new riders come aboard in September and would like to welcome you the VRE! (Veteran riders, thank you for your loyalty and we appreciate you spreading the word about our service so that newbies join us.)

In this monthly exchange, VRE management; Rich Dalton-Deputy CEO/COO and Chris Henry – Director of Rail Operations, take an hour and answer as many of your questions concisely and detailed as possible. We invite guest to our studio, such as stakeholders in our operation like CSX, Amtrak and our Operation and Maintenance Contractor, Keolis Rail Services. Veteran riders know we see the same questions from month to month, (we will get those FAQ's posted ASAP) but still enjoy the exchange for riders that don't know.

Now on to the questions!

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### **Joe from Burke asks:**

Last months complaint about the quiet car. The writer, an older male who flirts with young females on the quiet car by having a "whisper conversation" the whole trip. Isn't simply saying "Hello, good morning" as he wrote. This went on for days. I finally reminded him this was the quiet car. Casanova needs to go to another car to flirt.

### **VRE Management:**

The quiet car is a quiet car but not necessarily a silent car. We ask passengers to keep their voices to a whisper.

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### **TONY from Woodbridge VA asks:**

What are the hours of the coffee shop at Woodbridge, because I had to use the bathroom one morning, and it was closed. I had to hold it in until the train arrived.

### **VRE Management:**

The Woodbridge Vendor is open Monday – Friday 5:15a-11:30 pm, Saturday 8a – 4p. We are not sure what day you are speaking of, there was a day where they were experiencing plumbing issues and had to close the restroom.

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### **David from Fredericksburg asks:**

How's the Spotsy station coming along. When is it scheduled to open now?

### **VRE Management:**

We are now planning a Fall opening and will update you as soon as we know the exact opening day.

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### **Janet from Spotsylvania asks:**

Status update on the opening of the Spotsylvania station and related change to the F'burg line schedule?

### **VRE Management:**

See previous question on Spotsy station. Also, we are working to finalize new schedules for both Fredericksburg and Manassas Line trains.

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**Carol** from **Brooke** asks:

Would you please work with the conductors on the 306 to stop the Leeland Road people from queuing at the Brooke stop, particularly those in the 4th car from the engine. Once the train hits the Brooke platform, there are more than a dozen people that stand up (in the upper seats) and get in line for the Leeland stop. Numerous people have almost missed getting off at Brooke thinking that those people are waiting too waiting to get off at Brooke, including myself.

**VRE Management:**

We are looking at possible policy changes on queuing solutions.

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**Dave** from **Woodbridge** asks:

Issue: Cueing in the aisles. This has gotten much worse on train 303 in the last car. Now, 4 - 6 people begin cueing for Woodbridge before the train even gets to Franconia/Springfield. Please try to do more than just issue courtesy reminders to passengers or talk to the conductors. Those things have no impact. In fact, these passengers stand there and talk to the conductors and even other VRE staff who get on at Alexandria. Post signs, have conductors make live announcements (not the old recordings) or other measures.

**VRE Management:**

See previous question.

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**VRE Management:**

The Emergency Order specifically dealt with Train Control Technology on the Northeast Corridor (NEC). FRA also issued a safety advisory for the trains beyond the NEC. We continue to work with the FRA to promote rail safety.

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**Sarah** from **Woodbridge** asks:

There is a passenger that gets on at Union Station that frequently pulls up his pants leg and rubs ben gay or tiger balm lotion on his naked leg. Not only is the sight of his exposed leg offensive, but the smell from the ointment is over-bearing. Please have the conductor speak to him! Thank you! Sarah

**VRE Management:**

Courtesy reminder from a fellow passenger.

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**Woodford Commuter** from **Woodford VA** asks:

Please tell me an instance where VRE actually lowered costs (Do not count the instance back in the mid-90's where VRE was desperate for ridership.)

**VRE Management:**

We work to keep our cost as low as possible. However, some costs rise each year based on contractual agreements (track fees, operations, and maintenance).

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**Woodford Commuter** from **Woodford, VA** asks:

Horrible way to handle the situation from FBG line fatality. It is nothing but play time for Investigators to "search" and "investigate" while thousands of riders are stranded and waiting. -Three- Amtraks conveniently passed right by 300, but all VRE lines were at a stand still. If "investigation" is to be done, then it should be done without hundreds of people waiting. Why have all non-300 trains wait? Simply inefficient. Try harder!

**VRE Management:**

The incident last week was tragic and was anything but "play time." Tracks 2 and 3 were both closed, Amtrak trains occupied track 3 and VRE trains occupied track 1. When Track 3 was reopened the Amtrak trains were allowed to proceed to clear the track so that VRE trains could then proceed with movement over to track 3. Only tracks 2 and 3 operate north of Fredericksburg.

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**Woody** from **Woodbridge** asks:

The problem continues with passengers from the 303 in Woodbridge. I saw 2 near-misses (again) last week with cars crossing Route 1 from Dawson Beach. The right lane is for right turns only onto Route 1, but cars continue to barrel through the intersection. I know this has been discussed in the past but nothing has changed. thanks!

**VRE Management:**

We continue to work with Prince William County on this issue.

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**Rocky** from **Fredericksburg, VA** asks:

In your email you say if you would like to ask a question just "simply click the "Ask" button." It is not so simple when there is no ASK BUTTON to click. Please provide accurate information if you really want people to participate. When I finally called your office they gave me other instruction that still didn't work quite right. and a hand full of excuses about the website being change. To my request; Please put Fredericksburg schedules on the Fredericksburg trains, all of them. The Mannassas train schedules do little good on Fredericksburg trains.

**VRE Management:**

You are right. We will make sure it is all updated. Thanks

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**gene from burke va** asks:

The noise from train brakes are damaging our ears. it's a serious problem. People are standing at the stations with their fingers in their ears. When are you going to fix this problem?

**VRE Management:**

The brakes are performing as expected.

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**Chuck from Burke VA** asks:

Has a decision on service been made for 9/24? OPM has requested people telework due to the Pope's visit, security & traffic issues. Those of us in the private sector don't have this option, I've even heard the government may treat it like a bad snow storm. I'm a monthly pass holder and am really relying on you to get me to work. Thanks

**VRE Management:**

VRE will operate full service. No additional trains or change in schedule will occur.

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**Ron from Springfield, Va** asks:

The railroad bridge over the Potomac River looks like it was built before the Civil War. Is it safe enough to risk the lives of VRE and Amtrak customers?

**VRE Management:**

It is safe and is regularly inspected to ensure passenger safety. Please visit [longbridgeproject.com](http://longbridgeproject.com) for proposed plans on upgrades.

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**robert from potomac shores** asks:

in situations like last Monday (the 24th) with the service disruption, how can we apply for a FRC if we have our monthly ticket on the phone? I can't send in a copy to request one as with a paper ticket.

**VRE Management:**

submit your request to [mobilerefunds@vre.org](mailto:mobilerefunds@vre.org) with the subject line "FRC Request VRE Mobile"  
Include the following information in the body of the email: Email Username, Phone Number, Date of Delay, Train Number

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**Larry from Warrenton, VA** asks:

Turning right onto Piper Lane (Broad Run Station) from the main VRE parking lot is VERY dangerous in the afternoons. People exiting the lot from the other side travel WAY over the speed limit to race to the light at Piper Ln and 28. What can be done to both control the speeders and to enhance safety?

**VRE Management:**

We will continue to pass this issue along to Prince William County.

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**Santa from North Pole** asks:

When will the 2015 Santa Train rides take place and when will tickets be on sale? The [http://www.vrespecialevents.org/Seasonal\\_Santa\\_Trains/santa-trains.html](http://www.vrespecialevents.org/Seasonal_Santa_Trains/santa-trains.html) lists 2014 information only. :(

**VRE Management:**

Santa Trains normally takes place the second Saturday in December. This year it falls on December 12, 2015. Our plan is to sell tickets the Monday before Thanksgiving, November 23, 2015

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**Steven from Midland, VA** asks:

Afternoon trains can be very full but I see people blocking seats every day. They either put their bags/backpacks/purses/etc in the seat or they sit in the middle or aisle seats and don't move to

accommodate additional riders. What can be done to address this and why aren't the conductors encouraging freeing seats during their many walks through the trains?

**VRE Management:**

If there is a seat being occupied by a bag or someone who is sitting in two seats, notify the conductor and he will make sure the baggage is moved so you are able to have a seat.

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**Mike from Woodbridge, VA** asks:

What type of impact to ridership do you foresee for the 3 days the Pope will be in DC and will VRE be making any schedule changes for those days?

**VRE Management:**

We expect ridership to be heavy. VRE will not be making any adjustments to the schedule.

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**Mike from Fredericksburg VA** asks:

What is the status of replacing the old cars on 310/311?

**VRE Management:**

Seven new coaches are currently being manufactured and should arrive in early 2016. These coaches will replace the legacy set on 310/311.

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**David from Woodbridge, VA** asks:

When your trains are parked at Ivy City, do you leave the A/C and lights on in the railcars all day?

**VRE Management:**

The trains are put on wayside electrical power so the locomotives do not have to run all day. The A/C is operated enough to ensure the coaches are cool at the first station stop.

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**Eva from Lorton** asks:

This is actually a safety concern. Not all the lights in the Lorton Parking lot are working and for those of us walking to the station, it is unsafe as we are walking in dark parking areas. Would you please have your personnel fix the lighting. Thank you.

**VRE Management:**

The power company is performing work on the service that feeds the lights. We are in contact with them and Fairfax County and will try to get a date for completion.

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**Loren from Lorton** asks:

What is the offensive smell at L'Enfant station? Especially in the afternoon/evening. It smells like sewage. Is there a problem with the sewage treatment system on the trains?

**VRE Management:**

There are no issues with the sewage treatment system on the trains. Please see page 7 of this link <http://vre.org/service/newsletter/2012/november.pdf>

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**Steve from Spotsylvania** asks:

Not a Q, but friendly reminder: Amtrak does not honor a day-of-grace for VRE monthly ticket holders on the first service day of the month, even when presented with a valid step-up ticket. Inquire with Amtrak conductor prior to boarding... some will align their recognition of a monthly pass with VRE's own policy.

**VRE Management:**

The grace period is a courtesy on VRE trains and not a requirement on Amtrak trains.

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**Reggie from Fredricksburg, VA** asks:

What us the status with the WFI problem ON THE Fredericksburg line going to be corrected? as of right now when you leave Fredericksburg, VA going to Washington, DC you are good until you get to Brooke, then the WFI comes back after you get pass Rippon. When you leave Washington, DC going to Fredericksburg, VA you are good until you near Rippon.

**VRE Management:**

The issue is coverage from the cellular providers. This is one of the reasons why VRE doesn't provide cellular WiFi on our trains, because of the lack of service.

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**David from Gainesville VA** asks:

Today's Washington Post pg A16 has a letter indicating VRE will be "terminated" in the near future due to implementation of PTC. Can you verify this. Also, will PTC cost be translated to another fare hike?

**VRE Management:**

VRE is working with members of Congress to extend the deadline for PTC implementation so commuter rail operations will not be affected. The estimated operational costs for PTC have already been budgeted.

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**David from Woodbridge, VA** asks:

Is VRE's website going to be redesigned this month? I thought it was to happen earlier this summer. the last time VRE's website was redesigned it happened in June or July.

**VRE Management:**

The new website will launch this Fall.

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**David from Woodbridge, VA** asks:

I have seen that when the conductor is checking tickets, he has a cell phone and is taking a picture of people's tickets on their phone. Why he is doing that?

**VRE Management:**

He is using a mobile inspector app to check the validity of VRE Mobile tickets.

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**M from Alexandria, VA** asks:

Why is 308 so consistently late?

**VRE Management:**

308 was late 1 time in July and 3 times in August one of them being the issue on Monday.

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**David from Woodbridge, VA** asks:

When I was getting my haircut last month, someone had said they are going to start building high speed rails here in Woodbridge, VA. Do you know anything about this?

**VRE Management:**

For more information about this please visit [dc2rvr rail.com](http://dc2rvr rail.com).

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**Kathy from Fredericksburg** asks:

In light of last week's issues with the metro option, Metro honored my mobile VRE ticket at Springfield, but when I exited at McPherson in the morning, I was told that what I had was not a VRE ticket (it says VRE!) In the afternoon, I encountered the same issue at McPherson and was told that I had to use my SmarTrip unless I had a VRE ticket. they didn't consider the mobile ticket a VRE ticket. Can someone chat with the Metro folks so that they are aware of the mobile tickets should a situation such as this arise again. Thanks.

**VRE Management:**

We have contacted Metro before VRE Mobile launched and will continue training for both Metrorail and Metrobus staff to recognize VRE Mobile Tickets.

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**Becky from Manassas** asks:

Want to say thank you to the entire VRE and Keolis staff for keeping the many passengers safe daily. Many other systems cannot make this claim. Just wanted to say good job. Happy Labor Day!

**VRE Management:**

Thank you for your compliment!

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**Dave from Manassas** asks:

Please put up a "Frequently Asked Questions" list on this site so we don't get the same questions asked and answered over and over (sometimes during the same forum). Even such things as site construction status, or long-range line extension plans could be included. Thanks.

**VRE Management:**

We are working to get an On-line Forum FAQ list on-line.

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**Rebekkah from leeland road** asks:

First, I hope the Engineer and crew on the fateful 300 that struck the pedestrian are doing well. I am so sorry they have to deal with the repercussions of such a tragedy.....now, please help me understand why VRE could not have arranged bus service or vanpool service or SOMETHING during that very lengthy delay. while frc's help some, they certainly do not help monthlies, AND nothing helps the short paycheck due to any delay which causes tardiness.many other transit systems have fare reimbursement automatically applied. Please help the little guy. Very disappointing.

**VRE Management:**

Please see our TrainTalk about the incident

<http://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/VAVRE/bulletins/116136b>

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**VRE Management:**

Our time is up! Thanks for the great questions. Even though September is a time of new beginnings, please remember to be safe while commuting, especially around the railroad. If you are a Woodbridge/Rippon rider, you will see us at the Featherstone crossing this Thursday doing one of our Safety Blitzes to remind drivers to never drive across gated tracks and other safety tips. Next Thursday on the 10th we will be at Quantico doing the same thing (if you want to bring us a care package from S&G that day feel free, but safety first)!

See Tracks, Think Train!

Rich, Chris, et al.