



Let's Talk

The On-Line Forum is now closed. We answered as many of the more than 400 questions as we could. Thank you for your comments.

[Service Information](#)

[Special Programs](#)

[About the VRE](#)

[Just for Fun](#)

[Feedback](#)

[Safety and Security](#)



VRE Management:

Hi this is Dale. As we begin our on-line forum, I am pleased to have the opportunity to take your questions, concerns, and I hope, compliments about our service. VRE continues to grow at a tremendous rate and you know that we are working hard not only to accommodate our growth but to look forward on ways we can expand even further. Many of you have already written and asked some questions and I have already answered them. I will post them now. I am looking forward to answer your other questions.

Roddy from Woodbridge, VA asks:

What's the status of the pass-through from the Woodbridge garage to the parking lot? The current situation is dangerous for pedestrians.

VRE Management:

Thanks for writing. We agree that this needs to be done. Coincidentally, one of our Capital Planning staff is going to Woodbridge tomorrow to review this. Look for a pass thru to be complete by this summer.

Annie from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

WHY are you raising rates and having the state plan to spend money on studying extending service to Gainesville Haymarket area, when current service is poor, many times people have to stand after Crystal City stop, and trains are late. Please take care of those of us who are loyal customers, and then we will support you.

VRE Management:

Needless to say that there are many residents of Western Prince William County that disagree with you. The Gainesville Haymarket corridor is growing at a phenomenal clip and is in desperate need of transportation. The proposal that we were asked to study and put forward as part of our Strategic Plan designates track improvements, stations, parking AND more equipment to accommodate the demand. The proposed budget amendment is for engineering, environmental and design studies. When Delegate May put forward the budget amendment he recognized that this would be the first step of many to bring train service west. However, without all of the items detailed above service will not be possible. This is not a done deal yet – look for more information as this progresses.

Dan from Haymarket, VA asks:

1. When can we have two quiet cars per train? The one we do have is becoming standing room only. 2. Will the weekly "Connections" type newspaper return? Aside from interesting articles, it had the one crossword puzzle I could mostly do.

VRE Management:

At this time we do not anticipate more than one "Quiet Car" per train. It is immensely popular on some trains, not as much on others. The Commuter Connection Newspaper will not return to the trains. We have been publishing our own "VRE Update" for several months now and plan to keep that format for the near term. We do, however, hear all of you cross word fanatics. Shortly we will expand the format to include more information AND a new crossword puzzle! On that topic, if you are a quiet car rider we need your help. We are having issues with "Quiet Car" conflicts – people who violate the rule are getting into verbal battles with other riders. A few of these battles have almost resulted in pushing and shoving. It is important that if you have a problem in the quiet car that you find the conductor – they are best able to handle any issues.

debbie from stafford, va asks:

I am concerned. Just last week your TVMs were experiencing difficulty and I was unable to validate my ticket. While this is not commonplace, these machines have had their share of problems. In those instances I do not have a validation on my ticket to show the conductor on an Amtrak train. What am I supposed to do?

VRE Management:

We are working with the contractor for the fare collections system to make the machines more reliable. In this case,

simply explain to the conductor prior to boarding that the machines were not working. He or she should allow you passage.

Anthony from Spotsylvania, VA asks:

The last 4 emails to GoTrains took 7, 12, 17, and 19 days to receive an email. That's kinda long - is there anyway to get faster responses? One was time sensitive to do with expiring FRC's. It was answered after they expired causing a little anxiety.

VRE Management:

Thanks for letting us know. Generally, we try to answer within 5-7 business days. We have three people whose responsibility is to answer each customer e-mail individually, but sometimes that isn't enough to get answers out as speedily as we want. Depending on the current circumstances they may get bogged down and take more time to answer. In the future, if you are concerned check to see if it is on the website and feel free to call us directly.

Tony from Spotsylvania, VA asks:

Each morning train 300 pulls into the Fredericksburg station. On the second or third car back, the rear stairs/door will open a. sometimes, b. sometimes just the door, c. sometimes the door will open and the trap will partially open. I get a runaround answer that this is a cab car and the door doesn't open. Why, then, does it do all of the above. It causes delay in boarding the train. I have written 3 times about this but just get ignored. I sure would like an "official" answer. I even asked this the last chat but was also ignored. Fix the trap and door, please!

VRE Management:

The trap has an eye that acts as a safety mechanism. If that 'eye' gets dirty then the trap does not always function correctly. I will have our Mechanical Department take a look.

Mark from Broadrun VA asks:

Q.#1 I ride train #324 from Broadrun. I believe that the train consist is made up of leased cars from Seattle. When will the lease be up and these cars returned to Seattle. What cars will replace them? Q.#2 I read in the local paper that VRE is planning yet another fare increase. When does VRE plan to implement this new fare increase?

VRE Management:

Their return is not imminent, but as we are able to replace them with refurbished Gallery cars we will return them to Seattle. As for the fare increase, as part of our budget that was approved in December, a subsidy increase of 2.75% or \$525,060 from the local governments was approved and an overall increase of 2.75% or \$525.060 was budgeted. As part of the process, we will hold fare increase hearings at a variety of locations to discuss the increase and how it will be implemented. Look for information online, in the VRE Update and in the papers on this shortly.

Tony from Spotsylvania, VA asks:

I would gladly pay \$300 monthly (possibly more) for a guaranteed seat at a table, better yet with AC power and wireless. (Get T-Mobile to subsidize with Hotspots) There are a lot of folks that could do serious work on the train but need a few additives. Is there a way to accomodate those wishing to pay for a guaranteed seat? Possibly portioning off a car? It would increase revenue without any additional overhead costs. Just add a new price and when the conductor checks tickets it would show readily.

VRE Management:

Your idea is a novel approach, but right now because of crowding, it would not be able to be implemented. However, we are looking at adding hot spots to the trains. We are in negotiations currently for this, and if it can be done reliably and inexpensively, we will roll it out to the general ridership.

David from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

Are there any plans to increase parking capacity in Fredericksburg, or to legalize, pave, light, and stripe the gravel overflow? If not, how does VRE propose to deal with the ever increasing passenger load originating at that station?

VRE Management:

Lot G, the gravel lot, near the Fredericksburg station tough one. This area was never intended to be used on a regular basis and is therefore not considered a parking facility in the VRE system. The space was used as a staging area during the construction of Lot G and was not prepared for use as an everyday facility. However, as VRE has grown over the years, passengers began using this area for additional parking. Despite this fact, VRE's special use permit for Lot G only allows 250 parking spaces in this area. Therefore, not only is VRE restricted from making improvements to the gravel area

(including installing lights), but we technically cannot encourage passengers to use this area. While we understand the need for parking expansion and improvements at the Fredericksburg station, the City has made it clear that they will not support further expansion. Their decision was based on feedback they have received from residents in the neighborhood surrounding the Fredericksburg station and the congestion that the current parking lots cause. Our best recourse is to continue to engage Spotsylvania County in hopes that they will join the commissions and become part of VRE.

Ed from Manassas, VA asks:

What is the advantage, to a rider like myself, to convert 10 FRC's zone 1 to zone 9 that will expire on July 1, 2006 for a 10 ride, zone 2 to zone 6 in my case, ticket that expires in February 2006? I would think that 10 FRC's zone 1 to zone 9 would be worth much more than a 10 ride, zone 2 to zone 6 ticket.

VRE Management:

You can do whichever you want. It is your call. You can exchange for a 10-Trip or have a one-to-one exchange for FRCs.

Joe from Stafford asks:

As overcrowding continues to grow on all trains, could the conductors be instructed to tell passengers to not put their bags/papers/computers on available seats??....some people are scared to say anything, some are not, but it would help if conductors enforced this...tks!

VRE Management:

Yes, we will have conductors make additional and more frequent announcements.

Alan from Manassas VA asks:

Could you PLEASE do something more to keep people from massing in the aisles before the Manassas station? I truly don't care that they want to be the first off the train at Broad Run. I do not want them in my way when I'm trying to get off at Manassas. I've been polite; I've said "excuse me" dozens of times; I've waited patiently for them to clear room for me; all the time thinking that they'll get the message and not do it. But, that isn't happening, and it's getting worse. Your conductors don't bother making the announcements anymore,

which makes those people think it's ok to be in my way. I promise you, it's getting to the point where a physical altercation is the only logical result. I can't be any clearer than that.

VRE Management:

We know that we are having queuing problems on many of our trains, both Fredericksburg and Manassas Lines at several different stations. Like many issues of courtesy, this is a difficult one to address. In the past, we felt that education was the best form of prevention. However, our P.A. announcements, posters, and notes in Train Talk and VRE Update (formerly Commuter Weekly) have not been effective. Unfortunately, those who need to take the advice most think that it does not apply to them. We are working with Amtrak, from whom we contract our crews, to come up with a solution. However, it will take some time to resolve. One solution is to not move the train until everyone is seated. This is extreme, but it has worked in the past. In the meanwhile, look for a feature article on queuing in our next VRE Update.

Bob from Woodbridge, VA asks:

I have heard rumors of another round of increases in your prices. Is this true?

VRE Management:

Yes. 2.75% fare increase and a 2.75% increase in our subsidy paid by the 8 owning jurisdictions. In other words, the increase is being shared by the riders and the owners of VRE.

Nell from Manassas, VA asks:

Are there plans to run a later Manassas line train? I would ride every day if there were one around 8:00. As it is it is a real challenge for me to make the last train.

VRE Management:

We are in the process of completing 7 major projects on the railraod. When the projects are complete, we will be able to add four additional round trips for 8 total trains. We know now that many people want an early train on the Fredericksburg line and many want a late train on the Manassas line. We will give strong consideration to both of those if we can work the details out with the railroads.

Mike from Warrenton, VA asks:

Occasionally, I'm bothered by a strong odor of exhaust fumes.

This seems to occur only on the southbound afternoon trains (or perhaps one train). When this problem does occur it persists for nearly the entire trip--it's not isolated to instances where the train is in, or near, a tunnel. Help, Exhausted.

VRE Management:

As trains come through the Union Station tunnel, exhaust fumes are collected inside and can be brought in through the air vents. Our refurbished Gallery cars currently cannot close the air vents completely. We are looking for ways to alleviate the problem. If you are not on a Gallery car, please let us know and we will be sure to ask the conductors to close the vents.

Bill from Manassas, VA asks:

Can you provide a date certain when the junk Gallery cars will be replaced on the Manassas line? In my opinion, VRE riders are paying premium costs (both in fares and increased taxes) for very substandard service and equipment!

VRE Management:

I don't have good news. You will actually see more Gallery cars in the near future before you see any new equipment. We want to buy 50 new rail cars but we currently do not have the funding. To meet our explosive growth, we are continuing to obtain older Gallery cars and placing them in service. These cars fill the real need for seats.

Eric from Bristow, VA asks:

Exactly what is the current construction plan for parking expansion at Broad Run?

VRE Management:

The construction plan includes 2 separate additions the current parking at Broad Run. The first is a triangular shaped parcel of land adjacent to the northern section of the platform and will have approximately 80 spaces. Construction on this area has begun and we expect it to be complete in about 3 months. The second parcel of land is located where the barn currently sits. The barn will be removed and an additional 120 spaces will be available. Because of the nature of the site work, this project will take longer and we expect that it will be complete by the end of the year.

Dave from Fredericksburg asks:

What is the status of a Spotsylvania train station? Is there a

timeline?

VRE Management:

Spotsylvania is seriously considering the possibility of a station in Spotsylvania. I have personally provided data to them and have made a presentation to their board. However, I do not know of any time line. I think it's important if you have strong feelings about a station in Spotsylvania you should let your elected official know your opinion.

Judy from Woodbridge, Va asks:

Why was the callbox removed from the Rippon station (it was located next to the elevator on the platform level)? This eliminates any kind of assistance (in the event of no cell phone or dead battery, etc.)

VRE Management:

The call box was removed because of vandalism. There is a button that connects with the VRE office located in the control panel next to the elevator.

karen from manassas asks:

Just as a matter of edification, I want to let you know that I often travel on the 6:18 train out of crystal city. Very seldom, if ever, does the conductor check tickets. This has become widely known and many don't bother to validate their tickets. So we honest patrons don't end up paying the bill for those less ethical train riders, please have your conductors do their jobs.

VRE Management:

Right now, we have staff that are auditing every train in service to verify ticket inspections. Based on our ridership and growth and our fare collection, we believe we have an estimate on what our overall fare evasion rate is. However, having staff eyeball every ticket will confirm these numbers. Look for someone in a yellow jacket to ride your train soon.

Linda from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

While I appreciate the fact that VRE was trying to save money by purchasing the cars from Chicago, would it be possible to adjust the number of cars in the consists to accomodate the numer of passengers? I had to stand from Crystal City to Rippon on the #311 train last evening along with quite a few others.

VRE Management:

I am trying to obtain additional mid-day storage space in Washington, so that we can lengthen current trains and provide additional seating. I hope that I will be able to arrange this within the next two months. By then, we will have the additional equipment to lengthen some trains.

AB from centreville VA asks:

What are your plans to alleviate parking woes in Manassas Park?

VRE Management:

We just expanded the lot within the last three years. However, we plan to expand parking in Manassas, Burke Centre, and Broad Run within the next few years. This should remove some of the pressure from Manassas Park. As money becomes available, we will add additional parking spaces.

John from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

I spent 3 hrs on the train 303 Monday because of CSX signal problems South of Quantico. It seems that everytime it rains CSX has a signal problem. What has VRE done to pressure CSX to provide better a more reliable signal system? This is also a safety issue for passenger trains. Do we need to get our US Senators and Congressmen involved?

VRE Management:

I know that was miserable, especially on Valentine's Day and probably should not have happened. It is frustrating to deal with an organization who tells us that they would really like to do the right thing and keep trains on time, but is continually hampered by infrastructure and other issues. I am continuing to talk with senior executives at CSX. Until the 7 major projects on the CSX line are completed within the next 2-3 years, we will probably continue to see problems. With the completion of these projects, the signal system will be upgraded on large sections of the railroad eliminating the problems we see today.

Don from Fredericksburg asks:

Can VRE send short text messages to cellphones about delays and cancellations?

VRE Management:

Funny you should ask. We have recently completed a procurement for the next generation of Train Talk. As part of

that we will be able to send 160 character messages to cell phones. Design has been done. Testing will begin shortly. Look for it mid-late Spring.

Charlie from Spotsylvania asks:

Currently passengers are cascading down a steep hill and jumping off a 4 foot retaining wall at the southern end of the Fredericksburg's platform. When is VRE going to build stairs at the southern point of the platform, to avoid someone getting injured?

VRE Management:

We know this is a problem. It is part of our capital project plan for this coming year. We are working on design and must get permission from CSX before we can proceed. Our Director of Construction and Facilities tells me I will be able to walk on these stairs within a year.

Don from Fredericksburg asks:

Baseball has come to DC! Are there any plans for weekend service and/or late night service (ie, after 11:00pm) for night games?

VRE Management:

We will look into the possibility. However, I do not want to compromise the current schedules and service with special excursion trains. Although members of my staff are big baseball fans and are lobbying hard for at least a few trains. We will let you know.

Diane from Woodbridge asks:

Can you ask your contractors at the Woodbridge station not to pile the snow in front of the only set of steps out of the parking lot (the new one behind the multi-level)? It was frustrating trying to climb over the snow pile and there wasn't even much of an accumulation.

VRE Management:

Yes, I'll take care of it.

Patty from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Can you negotiate with Amtrak to reinstate the Woodbridge stop made by Amtrak Train #86, M-F at 9:55 AM. On any given day there were 15-20 Amtrak and VRE customers who would be waiting to board this train. Train service should be

increasing NOT decreasing!!

VRE Management:

Yes, I will try to reinstate it. I don't know how successful I will be.

Gay from Manassas, VA asks:

I board the VRE at 4:05 pm in Alexandria for the trip home to the Old Town Manassas stop. The train just before that is a Fredericksburg train. When the Fred. line stops there is a yellow liquid that pours out of the "holding" portion of a tank also marked "discharge". Can you tell me WHAT this yellow liquid is???? I certainly hope it isn't what I think it is!!!

VRE Management:

I hope it isn't either! I will have the mechanical department take a look at it immediately.

Bob from Fredericksburg asks:

Wht do I have to work Free Ride Cupon exchanges/transactions through the mail? Why not let the conductor handle routine events like exchanging expired FRC? The mail cost both you and me and takes a week to 10 days.

VRE Management:

Actually, it is easier for us to handle the volume this way. However, during the month of March we will begin to exchange them in person and of course, we begin Meet the Managements at our afternoon stations in April and we will exchange them there.

David from Manassas, VA asks:

On occassion, you have had "meet the management" sessions at various train stations. The problem with that is that people are either rushing to get on the train, or rushing to go home/to work. They don't have time to sit and chat at the stations; they are on their way some place else! Therefore, why not have "meet the management on the train"? Instead of announcing a specific station, you would announce specific trains. E.g. the management could stay on the same train all day, and stay in the front car, (the announcement would apply to the numbers associated with that train throughout the day), where, if anyone had a question, they could walk to where you were and ask.

VRE Management:

I like your suggestion. I will personally ride a few different trains in the near future to see what response I get. There will probably be two of us to address your questions and concerns.

Howie from Burke VA asks:

Is there any chance you would consider allowing riders to carry on board regular sized bicycles? Thanks for your consideration of this request.

VRE Management:

Yes. The specifications for new rail cars can accomodate 2-3 full size bikes in the new cab car design. Ideally, as we buy new rail cars, a bike rider would be able to ride any train within the system.

Vaughn from Stafford, VA asks:

I understand there is some concern from the recent CA train derailment about the engine pushing the train instead of pulling it. Is that a valid safety concern and what is VRE doing to address it?

VRE Management:

Actually, a review of accidents by the FRA has found that there are more accidents when the locomotive is leading than when the cab car is leading, but they do not know why. As far as VRE, we have very few at grade crossings. We are attempting to eliminate all of them. While in L.A. they have many more. Second, we do not operate at the higher speeds that L.A. does, providing more time for the engineer to slow down. In our history, we have had one car/train collision. The car lost, but there were no injuries.

Carol from Woodbridge, VA asks:

What is the practice for checking validated tickets? The entire month of January and up to today I have not seen a conductor 1 time on the morning train. I sat across from the same man 4 days straight, he had an FRC in his ticket holder and got off every day without anyone taking it. Other riders were joking that the morning trains are 'free rides' and why bother with a ticket? I spend \$226.70 each month for my monthly ticket; it's very disheartening to know I could very easily ride for free. At the beginning of 2004 the conductors were very diligent about checking tickets-what's happened???

VRE Management:

Please email gotrains@vre.org with your train number as we discussed earlier, our auditors are visiting trains. I will be sure to add this one to their short list.

Martin from Fredericksburg asks:

I ride in a gallery car going home every day, there was a time that the seats could be adjusted to face forward or to the rear, lately they were fixed with several of the seats facing each other loosing valuable foot-room if you don't want them to be adjustable have them adjusted to face the ends of the cars to maximize footroom

VRE Management:

I will ensure that all Gallery cars seats are adjustable. I am having bolts and screws removed on those seats that allow them to be adjustable.

Gene from Dumfries, VA asks:

About 2-3 months ago CSX did some road bed work at the Rippon Station. In doing the work several ties were broken. The ends of the ties were broken often leaving the plate that secures the rail floating. By itself- probably no big deal but this is in a section of the track with rotting and cracked ties and welded track. There is a lot of movement in that section especially when a heavy freight roles through. I do not want to see lives lost because CSX does not mopnitor the track in a timely manner. This is the same section of track where it took them almost 8 months to repair a bad section of track. I don't want to be in a position of "I told you so!"

VRE Management:

I don't think that it is a problem, but I will send your comments to CSX today.

Ted from Fairfax Station, VA asks:

Have you analyzed the popularity of the five-day pass vs. the ten trip? During those times I am unsure of my commuting days, I find the five-day pass very inconvenient. I would much prefer to see the five-day pass eliminated and have the ten trip available at the five-day price.

VRE Management:

Yes, approximately 7% of the ridership uses the 5-Day pass. Monthly, 5-Day, and TLCs reduce the need and the wear and tear on our fare collection machines. They are easier to

inspect. Much like people get a discount for being a frequent flyer or a frequent user of a product, that is how our discount is structured. We realize 10-Riders would prefer a deeper discount, but we are purposefully structuring our fares to encourage the use of passes.

Kit from Burke, VA asks:

Also, by the way, kudos to the team making the stations and parking areas safe for us after snow and ice!

VRE Management:

Thanks for the compliment. We have made a great effort over the last few years to ensure that the platforms and parking lots are safe. We have spent more money in this area and we are also working closely with VDOT and jurisdictions to have them give priority to the parking lots. I am very pleased with the coordination and the efforts these people have made.

Christine from Manassas asks:

Some people have no concern for others and put their feet on the seats. This is disgusting!! Can conductors do something about that?

VRE Management:

We once initiated a courtesy campaign called Everything You Need to Know to Ride the Train You Learned in Kindergarten. As a parent, some people need a refresher on these skills. We continue to ask the conductors to monitor this and we do courtesy campaigns. Please talk to your conductor if you see this happening.

Kathy from Bristow, VA asks:

I seem to be in the minority, but I hate those Seattle cars!! I travel from Broad Run to L'Enfant (over 1 hour each way) and sitting knee to knee with no room to move my feet or legs causes me physical pain. Please tell me the new gallery cars won't have this "facing each other" configuration. I like the current gallery cars--they're still better than the uncomfortable Seattle cars.

VRE Management:

Any new cars we purchase will not have facing seats.

Shawn from Woodbridge, VA asks:

I've am a former rider of VRE. In my opinion, the service that

VRE provides has dropped dramatically over the last few years. I've seen more delays (most of which I know if not VRE's fault) and more overcrowding of trains. Also, the cost of VRE is rising. I have seen very little improvement overall. I do thank VRE for extending the parking lot at the Rippon station bu this has not been enough to sway me back from using other means of transportation to DC. What can VRE do to sway riders like myself to come back to VRE ?

VRE Management:

Unfortunately, there is not much room for new riders. There is no doubt that riders feel that our service is deteriorating because of the crowding on the trains and in the parking lots. Having to use older equipment does not help. We do not have the funding to buy new equipment and expand parking as rapidly as the demand for our service grows. We have asked for additional funding at the federal and state level and have had some success at the state level. Hopefully, we will obtain additional federal funding this year, but that is not certain.

Michael from Manassas, VA asks:

I noticed advertising on trains last night. Isn't this one way not to have to raise rates? Also, both my wife and I ride the train. Any thoughts to giving discounts if you buy more than one ticket together?

VRE Management:

We want to do as much advertising on trains and platforms as possible. We made about \$100,000 thousand last year and we are doing everything possible to increase that amount. As the economy improves, you will start to see more advertising on trains and platforms.

Matias from Manassas, VA asks:

This isn't really a question, but I've noticed that queueing problems happen only in specific cars that are strategically located closest to the parking lot when they pull into the station. So I would suggest for those passengers that are fed up with queueing to simply try sitting in a different car if possible. Sometimes its only a matter of one car.

VRE Management:

We know that we are having queueing problems on many of our trains, both Fredericksburg and Manassas Lines at several different stations. Like many issues of courtesy, this is a difficult one to address. In the past, we felt that education was the best form of prevention. However, our P.A.

announcements, posters, and notes in Train Talk and VRE Update (formerly Commuter Weekly) have not been effective. Unfortunately, those who need to take the advice most think that it does not apply to them. We are working with Amtrak, from whom we contract our crews, to come up with a solution. However, it will take some time to resolve. One solution is to not move the train until everyone is seated. This is extreme, but it has worked in the past. In the meanwhile, look for a feature article on queuing in our next VRE Update.

Dan from Manassas Park asks:

You mention that we will see more Gallery cars in the coming months, is this going to be evenly distributed with the Fredericksburg line? As mentioned, both sides are paying the same rates, yet it seems that the cattle cars are primarily on the Manassas Line. Last year, we were told this was because of special maintenance requirements of the new cars, which can only be done on the Fredericksburg line. What was the logic of buying cars that have such restrictive requirements, and if the additional are ever purchased, will they be these same finicky cars?

VRE Management:

First, they will replace the Sounder equipment since they are leased. Then we will lengthen trains. We will make every effort possible to make it fair between the two lines.

VRE Management:

On that note, we often hear from you that we favor one line over the other, whether it is distribution of equipment, priority in scheduling, new parking lots, even who gets what Meet the Management when. I want to assure everyone that we do not value one line over the other, nor do we make decisions based on these types of preferences.

Tom from Dumfries, VA asks:

I would like to inquire about the extra benefits that seem to be going to the VRE riders that elect to ride the Amtrak for an additional dollar. The Amtrak does cost more than the VRE fares, but VRE seems to pay the difference between the two fares. The VRE riders only pay a dollar more and it seems to me that if riders elect to ride the Amtrak, then they should pay the full Amtrak fare since not all VRE riders have the same benefit of catching an Amtrak train at their respective stations. If this is a wrong way of thinking please put me straight. Thank you!

VRE Management:

I agree with your reasoning and I am again studying whether to institute a step-up fare for riders on Amtrak trains. I know from last year's public hearings that this is very unpopular with Amtrak riders. But you are right, it costs VRE to transport a rider on an Amtrak train. They have a faster trip time and a much nicer coach car. I will be discussing this again in the upcoming public hearings on the next fare increase.

Tim from Fredericksburg asks:

Can VRE do anything about the increase in cigarette smoking on their platforms? I catch the 305 at L'Enfant most every evening, and many times there is a man standing in the middle of the platform smoking. I've asked VRE in the past for at least a courtesy announcement, but have received no response.

VRE Management:

Smoking is permitted only in the north 100 feet of the platform. I will have personnel stationed at L'Enfant in the near future to correct the situation that you are encountering.

John from Fredricksburg, VA asks:

Do you ride VRE? Do you know what % of VRE management or staff ride VRE?

VRE Management:

Yes, I ride the train almost every day from Burke Centre and approximately one-third of VRE staff ride the train on a regular basis. Other staff ride occasionally so they may understand the kinds of issues that you face. Although I ride from Burke, I do take trips on the Fredericksburg side also.

Tim from Manassas, VA asks:

Does VRE have a commuter oversight committee? Who are the political leaders that exercise control over VRE?

VRE Management:

Yes, we have an Operations Board made up of politicians from the owning jurisdictions. For more information on who they are visit our website at <http://www.vre.org/about/opsbd.htm>.

VRE Management:

Our time is up. We have received more than 300 questions today and could only answer a fraction of those questions in

one hour. But it is important for us to hear from you. We will read all of the questions that you have asked. In April, we will start our Meet the Management series again. I will be able to meet you personally on the platform. I also will ride select trains and conduct an on-board Meet the Management as suggested by one of you. It is difficult to provide positive succict answers to all of your questions and provide the many improvements that you have asked for. They are reasonable requests and well thought out. But the reality is that our funding is very limited right now to accomplish those. It is frustrating for me and my staff of 34, but we will continue to do our best with what we've got. As always, thank you for riding VRE and helping us make it what it is -- one of the better commuter railroads in the country. I will see you here again in March at our next on-line forum. Best Regards, Dale

[△ TOP OF PAGE △](#)

© Copyright 2000 • Virginia Railway Express