

# Virginia Railway Express

## Let's Talk!

The next VRE online forum will start on Wednesday, January 4th at 12 noon.



There are currently 109 questions waiting to be answered.

### **VRE Management:**

Happy New everyone! I hope you had a safe and enjoyable holiday season and have come back as refreshed as I am. I am looking forward to a great 2006. Certainly, I know that on-time performance needs to be our New Year's resolution. I resolve to work hard to return to on-time and reliable service.

In reveiving the data for the past two months, both speed restrictions and mechanical delays have dropped, although there is still much room for improvment. I continue to watch it closely and will put pressure on CSX to operate VRE trains as timely as possible.

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### **Erik from Fredericksburg, VA asks:**

What kind of gas mileage do our trains get?

### **VRE Management:**

Ah, an easy to start with! Our trains run at about 4-5 gallons per mile (0.2 miles/gallon).

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### **Suzi from Fredericksburg, VA asks:**

All to often I am noticing cars that use the commuter lots for longer than overnight. Is there anyone checking the lots to make sure cars aren't abusing the spots? I keep a lookout of Lot G (where I always park) and have noticed the same cars in the same spots for days. Who can I report these cars too?

### **VRE Management:**

Overnight, even for extended periods of time, is permitted at the owners risk. However, if you think that there is a car that has been in one spot for more than a week, please email us at gotrains, with as much information as you can provide. Our Superintendent of Operations, Safety and Security will then look into it. In the past, we have found some abandoned vehicles and followed the necessary process to remove them. There are also times when someone uses the parking lot while they travel.

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### **John from Manassas, VA asks:**

When will the roof be installed at the expanded Manassas Park station?

### **VRE Management:**

We are waiting for the manufacturer to finish constructing the canopy. We expect that it will be completed by the end of the month.

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### **Marty from Annandale, VA asks:**

When the Sounders are returned to Seattle will Gallery Cars be used as replacements? Many of us prefer the Gallery cars over the Sounders and will be glad to see the last of the Sounders (Bombardiers).

### **VRE Management:**

The Sounders are currently being leased until December 2007. At that time, we will be replacing them with Gallery cars. However, I remain hopeful that we will be able to find the funding between now and April to exercise

the option for 50 new Gallery cars.

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**Roger Savage from Fredericksburg, VA asks:**

Will there be better enforcement of the quiet car rules.

**VRE Management:**

Our quiet cars pose quite a challenge. When we instituted these cars, we knew that enforcement would be difficult. We have asked our conductors to intervene when a serious problem arises or as they walk through the car. We expect that our passengers will be able to courteously remind each other that they are in a quiet car and remain respectful of the rules in these cars.

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**Lee from Fairfax Station, VA asks:**

What are the estimated start and completion dates for the Burke Centre Parking garage?

**VRE Management:**

Fairfax County is planning of soliciting for the construction this summer. Once the construction team is selected, we will have a better idea of the time line. At this point, without this time line, we expect it to be completed in late 2007.

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**Marsha from Manassas, VA asks:**

Trains 326 & 329 are consistantly filled to capacity while when I ride 328 & 331 which are much longer there are plenty of extra seats. Why not take one car from each of those trains and add them to the earlier trains?

**VRE Management:**

When we looked at ridership patterns to decide where to put the 8 car set on the Manassas line, train 326 and 329 did not carry as many people as 328 and 331. We agree that the 8 car set gives 328 and 331 more capacity than it currently needs. Because we have to have an extra crew member anytime a train has more than 6 cars, we are not able to move one car from that set to another. Our current finances will not allow us to bring on the additional crew member required. We do track our ridership on all of our trains daily and when we are in a position to add more crew (and cars) we will look at the trends and determine the best place to put them.

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**Rick from Lorton, VA asks:**

Why is overnight/over weekend parking allowed for non-Fairfax County vehicles? This has severely effected avaiability of spaces on teh lighted aresa of teh parking lot as well as when snow removal is required.

**VRE Management:**

Because the lot was constructed with federal funding, we cannot limit who parks there. We know that at Lorton, there are several passengers who park a second car there so they can drive to their final destination. This may account for some of the non-Fairfax County vehicles in that lot. Additionally, compared with some that are at about 120% capacity, the Lorton lot remains at about 40% capacity.

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**AI from asks:**

the next january 3 on wednesday is in 2007

**VRE Management:**

Sorry about the typo – sometimes we are a bit date challenged around here.

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**Lou Anne from King George, VA asks:**

Have a question about the Leeland VRE lot - why is the new section restricted to Stafford residents only and who paid for the construction (Stafford Co. funds or State of VA funds). While I do live in King George, am a Stafford County property owner and pay real estate taxes. Also, it can sometimes take me 20-30 minutes to exit the lot at night. Why is the entrance to the new section blocked? Opening it would certainly help the flow of traffic out of the lot at night. Thanks.

**VRE Management:**

The second lot was not built by VRE but by the developer. In their arrangements with the County, the decision was made to restrict it to Stafford County residents only. The entrance from the old lot to the new lot was blocked because of this issue. In order to restrict who parks there, the lot must be viewed as a separate lot with a separate entrance.

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**Ashok from Lorton, Virginia asks:**

I asked the same question a lot of times but never got a response. VRE's last train to Washington DC is at 8:35 AM from Lorton. If i have to go to work late, what are my options if i am holding a monthly pass? This is one of the reasons why i am unable to buy a monthly pass. Do you have any plans to add another train to Washington after 8:35 AM in the future?

**VRE Management:**

Our Memorandum of Understanding with CSX only allows us to operate a specific number of trains. As a result, we have operated the trains at times when they are most heavily used. Train #310, our last one, is one of the least heavily used trains in the system. If you would like to use a monthly pass, you may want to use the Franconia/Springfield station on the days you go in late. While you would have to pay for parking, it would give you the flexibility to use either Metro or VRE.

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**Ray P from F'burg, VA asks:**

I know VRE considers "on time" as within 30 minutes of the published schedule. Why do you no track "on schedule" performance with a + 5 minute margine? I'm sure you will be surprised at just how bad the service has gotten, yet rates continue to rise.

**VRE Management:**

There are two different time markers that we use in our service. The first is for actual on-time performance. In order to be on-time, a train must arrive at its final destination within 5 minutes of its scheduled time. Anything 6 minutes or more is considered late. These are the numbers we use for our published on-time rates. The 30 minute mark is expressly for the FRC policy.

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**Cindy from Manassas VA asks:**

During the warm weather the tracks at L'Enfant smell horrible due to VRE and Amtrak discharging the toilet tanks on the tracks. They are doing it in Manassas City too. What can be done to stop this foul practice?

**VRE Management:**

I was actually at the L'Enfant station for the Meet the Management and have smelled this myself. However, after some investigation, we determined that the smell was actually coming from people who had urinated on the rails. Then as trains run over them, the smell emanates. The discharge that comes from VRE trains, once it flows through the septic system is odorless and is "supposedly" clean enough to drink.

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**Jack from Manassas Park asks:**

When will the contractor who was supposed to be done by Nov 2005 be finished with the platform and remove their fence and equipment? They are taking up a lot of parking space and interfering with traffic flow. They sit there in the trailer a lot but it appears to be finished.

**VRE Management:**

There are some remaining items that need to be completed, including the installation of the canopy and the replacement of the two temporary lights. Most of this work will probably take place – weather permitting – on the weekend of the 14th. We hope that everything will be completed by the end of the month and the spaces will be released then.

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**Bob from Woodville, VA asks:**

Do you keep records of how often each engine suffers a malfunction which delays passengers? Do you have funds with which you could replace engines that break down unacceptably often?

**VRE Management:**

We do keep track of our locomotives and which ones have been associated with delays and why. Much like an old car, often repeated problems with one locomotive are not related. One time it may be related to a valve, which is promptly replaced. Another time it may be related to the air pressure in the brakes. While they cannot always be prevented through regular maintenance, these problems can usually be easily resolved. At this time, we simply don't have the funding to buy new locomotives.

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**Hammer from Fredericksburg asks:**

Now that Leeland has an expansion lot, will VRE or the county enforce the parking situation in the main lot, i.e., ticket the lazy people double parking, parking in non-designated areas ?

**VRE Management:**

Stafford County is in charge of enforcement of parking violations.

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**RJ from VA asks:**

Will VRE move to use SmartTrip or will there be a different system in the future?

**VRE Management:**

We are working with all of the transit systems to develop a regional fare collection service that would utilize technology like SmartTrip. We expect it to be at least 18 months before the system can be implemented.

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**Jeff from Culpeper, VA asks:**

The train consist for many of the Manassas trains recently changed. Could you tell me the consist of train 324? Also, could you please update the website with the new consist information? Thanks.

**VRE Management:**

The consists have been changing as a result of some mechanical work. When a change is permanent we post it on the website.

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**ditzi from freddyburg asks:**

Service hasn't improved any at all, as a matter of fact, the slug lines are getting to be astronomically long, and all are new faces, formerly VRE riders. What can you do to better service to lure back your rapidly abandoning passenger base? Unfortunately, once folks realize that slugging is the way to go, your ridership will drop even more. What's to keep folks from leaving you and the bad service in addition to VERY expensive tickets

**VRE Management:**

Our on-time performance improved in December. However, you are right, it is still at an unacceptable level. While we have not seen a significant loss of ridership, we know that service must improve.

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**Darlene from Quantico, VA asks:**

Could VRE lease a few trainsets to Amtrak during the weekend to increase their weekend service between Washington and Richmond?

**VRE Management:**

We don't intend to lease equipment to Amtrak for additional weekend service. At this time, Amtrak has not indicated that they desire to run more service or that they need assistance from us to do so.

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**James from Falmouth asks:**

what's up with the TVM's at Leeland Station ? maybe one of the three will complete a credit card transaction. the touch screens don't appear to respond. Is this an isolated problem, or do the other TVM's experience the same difficulty with their touch screens? [Redskins Rule]

**VRE Management:**

I know that our fare collection system has not worked nearly as well as we had originally expected. I will have our

fare collection team take a look at the TVMs at Leeland to see if there is something specific going on there. (And of course, we're all looking forward to a Redskins win on Saturday!).

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**Chris from Fredericksburg, VA** asks:

I've heard that a "station / platform" may be put in just south of the Fredericksburg station (where trains originate). If true, when would that be and how much parking would there be?

**VRE Management:**

Before a station can be built south of Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania must join the VRE "family." We have been talking with them, but no vote has been taken to join.

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**Tony from Spotsylvania, VA** asks:

Each morning folks get on the train and stage their baggage in the middle of the aisles and people have to navigate around them, nearly tripping. How about a reminder to store their baggage on the overheads or in the baggage areas. Some of the older folks are eventually going to trip on them.

**VRE Management:**

That's an easy one. We will arrange for announcements to be made on the trains and reminders posted in the Update.

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**John from Woodbridge, VA** asks:

Is VRE planning (or hoping) to install a new PA System with scroll signs at its train stations this year?

**VRE Management:**

We are working on specifications for the next generation of signs and PAs for the platforms. At this point, we are at the 50% mark on design. As for the government procurement, this will go out for bid, hopefully this summer. We expect to select the most qualified bidder later this year. At this point, I can't say when the first sign will be up, but we know this is an issue and are working to improve it.

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**Mike 36** from asks:

I won't make it today, but here's my proposal for the Fredericksburg line trains: Coffee, snacks and soft drinks car, please Top models announcing the stops like in boxing rounds' breaks. JUST KIDDIN' :>) HAPPY NEW YEAR AND GOD GIVES EVEN MORE SENSE OF HUMOR AND HEALTH TO YOUR LIFE>>>!

**VRE Management:**

I would expect that there are people that would support this proposal. However, although it is an interesting an idea and good for a laugh, it's not one that we will be able to support. :)

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**John from Burke, VA** asks:

Do we publish the on-time performance statistics, and if not why not. 2005 seemed to be a terrible year for on-schedule performance. Last night we were delayed 20 minutes for a freight train to pass near Backlick going home. This morning a hose broke and we were 25 minutes late getting to Union station. These latenesses don't mean we get a FRC, but they are important to our quality of life anyway and should be transparent to be addressed by management. Thank you.

**VRE Management:**

Our on-time performance measures are posted on our website at [http://www.vre.org/about/performance\\_measures.htm](http://www.vre.org/about/performance_measures.htm). They are usually posted monthly about halfway into the following month (December's information should be posted by mid-January). Currently, they are a bit out of date, but the current statistics (through November 2005) will be posted by the end of the day.

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**Rich from Bristow** asks:

During afternoon detraining at Broad Run, there is excessive speeding and aggressive driving taking place

between Observation Road and Piper Lane in an attempt to beat traffic out of the Piper Lane exit. This is being done by VRE passengers exiting from the Observation Rd. exit as well as Route 28 short-cutters. Who's jurisdiction is that area...Manassas or Prince William?

**VRE Management:**

Believe it or not. The new small lot is located in the City of Manassas. The large existing lot and the barn site are in Prince William County. However, Prince William has the majority of the jurisdiction and would be the appropriate jurisdiction. Every so often, we call them in to assist with parking lot issues such as these. Perhaps, in the new year, it is time to pay another visit.

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**John from Woodbridge, VA** asks:

when will we get heat at Rippon Station

**VRE Management:**

Because our stations are unmanned, they were not designed to have heat. We do not foresee implementing any kind of heating system at any of our outdoor stations.

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**Ron from Fredericksburg** asks:

At the Leland Station, cars travel much too fast in the parking lot, especially in the AM. Seems most are people being dropped off and not drivers planning to park. I would guess 40-45 MPH is typical. Is there some way to monitor/control the speed? Signs may help. Police monitoring? Thanks, Ron

**VRE Management:**

Stafford County is in charge of enforcement in the lots. I will have our Superintendent of Operations, Safety and Security to touch base with them to see if they can help out.

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**Alison from Manassas, Va.** asks:

Manassas Park Station: There have been instances where cars picking up passengers will idle in front of a parked commuter car rather than going to a pick up/drop off area, I have had cars blocking me and when I honk at them..they don't move. This has been an ongoing problem at this station, what is it that can be done about it?

**VRE Management:**

I'll have the Manassas Park police look into the situation.

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**Pete from Lorton, VA** asks:

Are you going to finish repainting the gallery cars into VRE red, white, blue, and gray?

**VRE Management:**

Our funding situation at this time does not allow for us to repaint the cars.

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**Mike from Manassas** asks:

I sent a letter (email) 4 week ago concerning customer service (or lack there of) to gotrains. Two week ago I sent a follow up? I have still not received a response. Can I get some one in your organization to respond to me?????

**VRE Management:**

I know that our Customer Service department is behind in answering emails. With recent service events, there has been a influx of emails causing a backlog. We'll get to your email as quickly as we can.

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**Dave from Springfield, VA** asks:

Last week and on Tuesday of this week, trains 308 and 310 were 3-5 minutes early in leaving Lorton Station. Has the VRE changed its schedule? What's going on? Many folks are now missing the train.

**VRE Management:**

For morning service, when trains leave, even one minute ahead of schedule, we have several people that contact us immediately. Without pulling the records from these trains, I cannot say for certain that they were not off

schedule. However, I would be surprised if they were. If you have questions, feel free to call and we will be happy to look into specific instances for you.

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**Sarah from Broad Run, VA** asks:

Why does the Manassas line have to wait until the Quantico Creek bridge is done to add the two trains? The Manassas line isn't anywhere near Quantico!

**VRE Management:**

CSX owns the tracks between Alexandria and L'Enfant. All Manassas line trains have to operate on these CSX owned tracks. When CSX looks at their overall capacity in this area, they have to include these trains. Eliminating the bottleneck at Quantico will improve the overall capacity of their tracks, including where the Manassas trains travel.

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**Tim from Fredericksburg** asks:

Is it still policy that monthly ticket holders have a one-day grace period where they can ride on their old ticket for the first riding day of the new month? If so, someone needs to remind the conductors.

**VRE Management:**

Yes, the monthly tickets are valid until 11:59p of the first service day of the following month. December 2005 tickets were valid through evening service on January 3.

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**Charles from Manassas, VA** asks:

Now that the Manassas Park platform has been lengthened and in theory the carrying capacity of the trains -- more cars, does VRE have plans to increase the parking there? In lieu of a parking structure on the existing property, could VRE enter into an agreement with the municipalities of Manassas, Manassas Park or PWC to provide a shuttle from various satellite parking facilities? This strategy would in turn limit the traffic and congestion caused by commuters travelling to Manassas and Manassas Park stations

**VRE Management:**

Manassas Park has had one of the most recent parking expansions. At this time, there are no plans for further expansion. However, plans are underway to construct a parking garage in Manassas and Burke Centre and we expect that this will take some of the pressure off of Manassas Park.

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**Fred from Ruther Glen, VA** asks:

I park at the Leland Road station to ride VRE. With the opening of the new parking lot (across from the new elementary school), can the handicap parking spaces (in the main lot) be increased?

**VRE Management:**

The new Leeland lot is wholly managed by Stafford County and is a completely separate lot from the existing Leeland lot. Consequently, any additional disabled spaces would be accommodated in the new lot, not in VRE's existing lot. If you have further questions on this, Stafford County Department of Transportation would be your best avenue for information.

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**Dianne from Woodbridge, VA** asks:

Since the "Quiet car" seats are limited, does this give riders on the other cars license to talk loudly during the morning trip??? Most riders are quiet, but there are those who often talk very loud. When asked to keep it low, they contend that they are not on the quiet car and continue at the same volume.

**VRE Management:**

We expect all of our riders to act courteously when they are on the train. Just as there are many who want to ride in quiet, there a number of people who have made friends along the way and enjoy talking with their fellow passengers. While talking loudly is discouraged, it is permissible. If you feel that a particular group is out of control, please speak with your conductor. As the authority on the train, the conductor can monitor the situation and determine the best course of action.

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**Marilyn from Fredericksburg, VA** asks:

Even if VRE riders can't ride Amtrak on the weekends why can't the schedules still be posted on our schedules in the event we do want to ride. I'd like to be kept updated if they make changes. It fit on the schedule before so didn't seem to be a space issue. Any chance of getting us back on Amtrak in the future even at a special rate like the stepup? Please advise. Thanks! Loyal rider...

**VRE Management:**

We do not post the weekend Amtrak trains on our schedule because we do not want to cause undue confusion to someone who may not realize that they have to purchase an Amtrak ticket for these trains. Amtrak's website does have a feature that allows you to select your travel time, date and stations to help you plan weekend trips. You can visit it at [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com).

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**Andrew from Fairfax, VA** asks:

The Manassas line trains are ALWAYS behind schedule arriving at Burke Centre - morning and afternoon. It seems to average 5 minutes late. Can the schedule be updated to reflect this reality?

**VRE Management:**

I board at Burke nearly everyday and I can tell you that the train is mostly on schedule. There are some occassions where it does get held up, but the delay is usually not significant.

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**Bob from Stafford** asks:

Your opening remark is appreciated. But exactly what control, if any, does VRE have over CSX? It seems it is "there game and rules!"

**VRE Management:**

Politically, we have made it clear that we should be provided better and more reliable service. It is their railroad, however, we use public monies for upgrading capacity and to pay our track fees.

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**Mike from Centreville, VA** asks:

You stated in another chat that a Powerpoint presentation of the new gallery cars would be available online soon. Is it, or will it?

**VRE Management:**

We haven't forgotten about our promise. The Gallery car presentation will be available under the "What's New" portion of the VRE homepage within the week.

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**Robert from Stafford** asks:

How hard would it be to build your own track for VRE use exclusively?

**VRE Management:**

Extremely difficult and extremely expensive.

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**Laura from Manassas** asks:

Do you ever plan to share the Kawasaki trains with the Manassas line again. First you told us it was due to storage and that is obviously not the case.

**VRE Management:**

In November we swapped equipment, moving the Kawasaki cars to the Fredericksburg Line. This was a permanent change made in order to achieve an equal balance of "new" equipment on both lines. The Fredericksburg Line now has two Kawasaki train sets and the Manassas Line now has two Bombardier (Sunder) train sets.

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**Inverse Forum from Fredericksburg, VA** asks:

Can you make the chat post the latest at the top so we don't have to wait and scroll to the bottom?

**VRE Management:**

We have attempted to put a program in place so that when the system refreshes it does not knock you up to the top. However, a known bug in Internet Explorer has prevented this from being viable for most of us. Unfortunately, answering backwards, bottom to top, might be good while we are doing the forum, but would be confusing for those reading after. We keep looking for good options to make this easier to follow along. Thanks for the idea.

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**Karen from Lorton, VA** asks:

Are VRE communications going to improve. For example, Dec. 22, the Fredericksburg line trains experienced major problems. Train Talk pointed to CSX communication problems as a compounding factor. However, for that very same incident, VRE experienced a major communication malfunction--you informed Train Talk subscribers that FRCs would be handed out the morning of the 23rd, but instructed conductors to hand them out on the afternoon trains on the 22nd.

**VRE Management:**

We know that there was some confusion regarding the distribution of FRCs. Riders who traveled on the Fredericksburg Line on the morning of December 22nd should have received an FRC at the time of the delay.

Those who used alternate transportation and did not receive an FRC can complete an FRC Request Form on our Website at <http://www.vre.org/programs/frc-request.pdf> and mail or fax the form to our office with a copy of their ticket. This will ensure that all receive the FRC they are due.

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**Tux A. Delux from Stafford, VA** asks:

When is VRE going to fix the potholes in the Quantico station lot? The 'back' parking lot has large potholes that have been there for months, if not years.

**VRE Management:**

The back lot does not belong to VRE. However, I will mention it to our Facilities Manager and see if he can get in contact with the owners so they can make repairs.

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**Fritz from Fredericksburg** asks:

Please resume allowing VRE riders to use the Amtrak on weekends with their VRE ticket. Sometimes I work 7 days straight. VRE weekend arrangements with Amtrak was an excellent program. I realize that VRE pays for this service but with the step up program, other ways could be found to contain costs.

**VRE Management:**

I promised I would look at it, and I will. I expect to make a decision by this spring.

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**John from Gainesville, Va** asks:

In the past few articles and in the last online forum, it has been stated that the Broad Run parking lot expansion would be completed by the end of 2005. Obviously that did not come to fruition and judging by how it currently looks, it doesn't appear even close to being completed yet - will we have to wait until summer before it's done?

**VRE Management:**

The inclement weather our area experienced in December pushed us beyond the scheduled completion date for this lot. However, we are hopeful that with mother nature's cooperation we can finish construction shortly and open the lot to Broad Run riders by early February.

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**Ray from NoVA** asks:

Will VRE begin a morning Southbound service and afternoon Northbound service? Also, what are the chances of

service to/from Richmond?

**VRE Management:**

Unfortunately, reverse flow service is not possible on the Fredericksburg Line at this time. Based on our negotiated contract with CSX, who owns the tracks, we are limited in how many trains they are willing to let us run on their system.

VRE has a Memorandum of Understanding with CSX that specifies how many trains we will operate in the future, which is tied to improvements in the tracks. Until the specified projects are completed, we can not add more trains in our current service area or farther south to Richmond.

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**Curt from Iorton, VA asks:**

Is there something that can be done about people who are using the VRE parking lot overnight and over weekends? They seem to use the best places right up front which is especially irritating when the weather is bad and I have to park way out there.

**VRE Management:**

The vast majority of the lots that serve our stations are designated for use by all commuters and are available for short term and overnight parking. With many riders out of town for business trips and meetings, it is not uncommon to find vehicles parked in the same space for a few days.

However, should you notice that a car has been parked for an extended amount of time, please feel to contact us. Our security staff can investigate further.

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**Dana from Burke, VA asks:**

When there are delays and / or problems with VRE Service, conductors typically hand out free ride passes. This is nice and all but it doesn't benefit the monthly commuter riders. Is there anything being planned to benefit monthly commuters for inconveniences with service when they occur?

**VRE Management:**

We understand that as a Monthly ticket holder you feel our FRC program does not appear to offer you any benefit. However, some Monthly ticket holders save FRCs to use in lieu of purchasing a Monthly ticket, during a month with planned holidays or vacation, when they will not be riding on every service day.

Others also carry their FRCs with them separately from their regular ticket so that should they ever misplace their ticket they can still travel until the ticket is recovered or replaced.

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**Dawn from Fairfax, VA asks:**

Could the engineers not pull so far up the platforms at Union Station? When the locomotives are under the waiting room considerable fumes seep in.

**VRE Management:**

We will raise this point with Amtrak to see if something can be done at Union Station. It is important for you to be comfortable both on the trains and at the station.

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**Michelle from Bealeton asks:**

Is there any estimate or plans for the Bealeton Station or have those plans been nixed?

**VRE Management:**

At this point all focus is on Gainesville/Haymarket. There is no current plan to take service to Bealeton.

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**Cliff from Locust Grove Va** asks:

Are there any plans to pave the expanded parking section of the Fredericksburg Lot (I think its G lot)?

**VRE Management:**

The City of Fredericksburg will not allow us to make any improvements to the overflow area as it is not a recognized parking lot.

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**Riders from Manassas, VA** asks:

I continue to stand in amazement at the number of riders continuously behave like my Pre-K aged child. Above all, when the trains are full, or when we are boarding, the Military men are the world's worst about allowing women to board before them. As a pregnant woman, I am seldom offered a seat, and I'm almost knocked down by the gentleman as I board. This requires no response, but I sure would like to put the word out and ask men to be men! I am a lady who sure would like to be treated like one. There was a time when an Officer was a Gentleman. Now he's a seat grubbing hog!

**VRE Management:**

As a former military officer, this speaks for itself!

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**Dave from Manassas** asks:

I believe the current sad, sad state of affairs with VRE's equipment is two fold: one, the "rush" to go into service way back when, not with new, fully-funded equipment, but with purchases of old, outdated equipment from wherever you could find it; and two, from a seeming lack of forward thinking in terms of procurement, i.e., replace x amount of stock each year or two years. Can you address the latter specifically?

**VRE Management:**

We don't disagree with some of your assessment. However, given funding constraints and increasing passengers loads, we made decisions to accomodate more people with older equipment. The opposite would have been to continue to run with single level cars and not be able to serve more riders. This is a classic MBA case study and would make a good thesis for someone.

We are working to rectify this as we seek to purchase 50 new cars this spring. The question is will we be able to find the funding to purchase them. At this time, the answer is still up in the air - the procurement is complete, it is purely a funding issue.

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**Aaron from Fredericksburg** asks:

No questions this time around. Just wanted to say that i appreciate your customer focus. More organizations should have forums like this. Impressive that you even take time to answer questions on train gas mileage and color schemes. Keep up the good work. Hitching a ride with strangers doesnt seem like the way to go to me, ill stick with the train.

**VRE Management:**

Ending on a happy note. Thank you.

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**VRE Management:**

We come to the end of another fun chat. As always, thanks to all of you for taking the time out of your day to participate in this session. We will archive the answered questions and make them available for later reading. Join us back here again on February 1 at noon for another on-line chat. Happy new year!

-Dale

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