

# Virginia Railway Express

## Let's Talk!

The next VRE online forum will start on Wednesday, November 14th at 12 noon.



There are currently 80 questions waiting to be answered.

**VRE Management:**

Hello! Thank you for joining me today. Let's move right to the questions.

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**Higgins from Alexandria, VA asks:**

Can you please add additional cars to train 310? It's been overcrowded for months. People are standing in the isles while the conductors complain to riders that they should "take a seat". This is ridiculous and unfair to people paying A LOT of money!

**VRE Management:**

We plan to add cars to this trainset as soon as we get the latest delivery of new cars.

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**Bill from Fredericksburg asks:**

You have mentioned several times about leasing engines until new ones can be brought on line. I haven't heard anything in a while..what is the status?

**VRE Management:**

An agreement for leasing three newer locomotives has been signed. We hope to have them in service by the end of this year.

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**Yerret from Fredericksburg, VA asks:**

1) Can I use a VRE step up fare to ride the Amtrak on weekends? 2) When will the trains have more rest rooms? Wait times to use the facility are getting longer.

**VRE Management:**

1)Amtrak Step-up fare is only available on select Amtrak trains Monday through Friday. When I raised the Step-up fare to \$10.00, I looked at the possibility of having this agreement extend to weekends. Unfortunately, Amtrak wanted to limit the cross-honor service to regular commuting days.

2)With the new cars, we will have more restrooms available. My goal is to have at least two restrooms on every train.

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**Mark from Spotsylvania asks:**

What are the percentage of riders from Spotsylvania boarding at Fredericksburg, and Leeland road? When will the survey results from October be available?

**VRE Management:**

As soon as our Operations Board has been briefed on the results, we will post them on our web site.

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**James from Falmouth** asks:

I ride the Fredericksburg line and the last car (quite car) on the train that depart Leeland @6:40 sways back and forth rather abruptly on certain sections of track. I do not notice it on other cars of the same train. What gives?

**VRE Management:**

Please send an email to "gotrains@vre.org" with the car number and I will forward it to our mechanical crew to take a look at it.

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**Bill from Stafford** asks:

When are the new cars coming? Next Month?

**VRE Management:**

Beginning in December, we will start receiving five cars per month for the next ten months. All new cars should be in service by October 2008.

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**Jim from Manassas, VA** asks:

We have not seen the VA State Police Dogs and VRE Security sweep the trains for a long time. Has this been discontinued?

**VRE Management:**

The State Police are changing their protocol for using dogs on train inspections. I expect that you will begin seeing them again in early 2008.

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**Kevin from Burke, VA** asks:

The construction on the new parking garage at the Burke station seems to be going along well. When is the garage scheduled to open?

**VRE Management:**

The garage is scheduled to be complete in the late Spring or the early Summer of 2008.

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**Hammer from Fredericksburg** asks:

When leaving Brooke station and heading south towards Fredericksburg, the track [closest to the platform] appears to be on a slight incline. When riding in the upper deck of a car, you get the feeling that the car could tip over if everyone were to rush to the low side. What is the required inclination in the track bed in order for the rails to be safe for upper deck cars?

**VRE Management:**

There are regulations on what the track condition must be to operate certain trains at certain speeds. I am confident that that section of track is meeting the standards necessary for passenger trains.

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**VRE Management:**

There are a number of questions regarding this morning's Fredericksburg Line service. Rather than answer several questions on the same subject, I'd like to address them with one explanation.

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**VRE Management:**

At about 6:00 am this morning, Amtrak train 98 struck a person north of the Rippon station. Initially, we assumed it was a fatality since the Amtrak train was traveling at about 70 mph. Normally in the case of fatality, the tracks remain closed for several hours for police investigation.

At 6:30 am, we were informed that there was only an injury, not a fatality, but an injury.

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**VRE Management:**

With this news, we assumed that the railroad would be opened shortly. At 6:50 am, CSX informed us that the railroad was re-opened.

Now, let's talk about what we did.

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**VRE Management:**

Once we found out about the accident, we started issuing communications through our platform system, Train Talk, and web site. Believeing that we were in for a long delay, we advised passengers to take alternate transportation. Once we found out that it was only an injury, we revised our communications accordingly. We have heard from some of you that the timing of our messages could have been better. We are reviewing the sequence of events to see where improvements can be made.  
Now back to our questions.

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**Davin from Woodbridge, VA asks:**

When are the new signs going to be installed at Woodbridge? I saw one at Lorton. We need them ASAP, as the old signs are not working anymore. We can only hear the announcement.

**VRE Management:**

There is one sign already in place at Woodbridge --- near the main entrance. Two signs (one facing north and one facing south) are scheduled to be added tomorrow. If all goes well, they should be up and running within the next few days.

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**Scott from Stafford asks:**

Since not everyone who rides the VRE works for the government, federal holidays become quite a problem for those that need to get into DC. Why can't VRE as least run a limited (heck very limited) schedule on those days for the many who rely on VRE but don't work for the goverment. Thank you.

**VRE Management:**

I know that all of our riders do not get some of the "lesser" holidays off and could take advantage of any service we offered on those days. Unfortunately, when we did provide reduced service on these days a few years ago, the light ridership did not cover the cost of operating just a few trains. As a result, when we had to find ways to save money, it was decided to eliminate this holiday service completely.

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**Cindy from Manassas, VA asks:**

If the metro fare increases will the TLC pass increase?

**VRE Management:**

At this time I'm not sure. If there is a change, we will be sure to let our riders know through Train Talk and VRE Update.

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**Bob from Crystal City asks:**

For next Wednesday (day before Thanksgiving) is it possible to modify the schedule to run extra trains in the early afternoon and fewer later? Many people will be heading home beginning around noon (making the single early train totally packed) and it is unlikely that many will be working late into that evening. Thanks

**VRE Management:**

Thanks for bringing this up. While we are not in a position to run more trains earlier in the day, we plan to add more cars to better accommodate the expected increase in riders on earlier trains.

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**Bob from Stafford asks:**

Should we still hold out hope that one day the windows in the Kawasaki cars will be replaced?

**VRE Management:**

Don't give up hope -- I haven't. As soon as I find \$400,00, I'll have them replaced.

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**Nick from Stafford, VA asks:**

What is the procedure for issuing "no ticket" violations? Last week I was onboard a southbound train and the conductor cited a passenger for no ticket. It seemed that after filing out the paperwork, the conductor met a police officer at Quantico Station and additional delay resulted in me arriving at Brooke Station LATE! Is this normal that

the entire train suffers? Would it have been prudent to have the issue resolved at Fredericksburg, the violator's intended stop?

**VRE Management:**

When a passenger is cited for failure to have a valid ticket, that person must provide a photo ID to the conductor. This helps ensure that the crew is not given bogus contact information. When someone is unwilling to provide this, the police are summoned to resolve the situation.

I agree that it is unfortunate that the whole train must wait based on the behavior of one individual. However, the procedure is necessary.

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**Peter from Burke asks:**

While today is a rather mild day, I suspect from this point forward, Old Man Winter is going to be a frequent visitor. With that in mind, where are the windbrakers you promised for L'Enfant and how soon will we see them in place?

**VRE Management:**

Wind brakes will be delivered to VRE in December and will be installed at L'Enfant by the end of January.

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**Tom from Fredericksburg asks:**

Just a positive note: The FRED bus feeder service to the Fredericksburg station is working nicely.

**VRE Management:**

Thanks for the feedback! I'll be sure to share it with FRED.

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**Brian from Springfield, VA asks:**

At Backlick Rd Station, why are the new Information displays located where you can't see them from the parking lot? The old signs were easily visible from the parking lot so you could get instant information on service. Now you must first park your car and walk all the way into the station to get information.

**VRE Management:**

The sign facing the parking lot at the Backlick Road station is in a location that can not accommodate the new signs. Part of the reason is due to the sunlight creating glare that would prevent it from being read.

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**Ed from Haymarket asks:**

I noted the announcement by the governor 1-2 weeks ago that planning for extension of the Manassas westward is proceeding. Do you have any updated information on this?

**VRE Management:**

The Governor announced that the construction of the interchange with Route 29 and I-66 will be moved up three years. The overpass construction should start in 2010.

This project is critical to VRE extension to Haymarket.

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**Kathi from Stafford, VA asks:**

Why doesn't VRE take advantage of the plasma screens at the stations. For example running the date and time, running headlines of today's stories, or even the weather report. Also, when the current train is arriving why don't you include what line, Fredericksburg or Manassas. As I new rider, I know many people who have gotten on the wrong line at the King Street station. Thank you.

**VRE Management:**

To eliminate any confusion about which train is headed where, all of our trains are marked with signs on the side of the rail cars to indicate their final destination (Fredericksburg or Manassas). Also, our conductors should be announcing destinations as trains arrive and depart the inner city stations. We will work with Amtrak (from whom we contract our crews) to make sure that these reminders are issued.

The new screens at our stations are directly connected to our communications system. Since these signs are

specifically designed to offer train updates, it's not possible to show information outside of VRE's communication system.

However, we are looking into adding "Rail Time" – our interactive service map showing the location and current delay information of each train -- once all the signs are up, tested and running.

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**Ron from Leeland Station** asks:

Can VRE offer any help with getting the stubborn developer to open Primmer House Rd? It would get us in and out of the Leeland parking lot much quicker.

**VRE Management:**

We do not have any information. I will see what I can do to help.

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**Morgan from Woodbridge, VA** asks:

The 306 train needs another car added to it. It is getting very crowded. Is this in the works? Also, I would like to make the suggestion, that people start sharing their seats and sit appropriately. The countless times, I have been sitting crunched in because someone is sitting with their legs spread. Share the seat please. Thanks

**VRE Management:**

As we get the new cars, we will be taking a look at where they are most needed. In the meanwhile, you heard it from Morgan -- be nice and share the seats.

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**Fred from Manassa** asks:

Are passengers allowed to stand on the VRE trains?

**VRE Management:**

Technically, yes. But when the standing leads to queuing, that's when I have an issue. I would ask that everyone take a seat when they can to keep the aisles clear for those wishing to detrain.

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**Janine from Fredericksburg** asks:

My husband and I commute daily on VRE and appreciate the service that your team provides. My question has to do with the loud squeaking and grating sound that is audible while sitting in the new cars, particularly near where the new cars connect to the old gallery cars. Can grease or some type of lubricant be placed on the parts that are rubbing to create the sound? I realize trains make sounds, etc, but this sound is extremely loud and it seems like a simple solution could help make the ride more pleasant. Perhaps we are just spoiled by the quiet smooth ride in the Kawasaki cars.

**VRE Management:**

I'd be happy to have our mechanical staff take a look at the problem you mention. Please note the number of the train and rail car you ride and submit a Train Information Form with your observations. You can access the form by going to <http://www.vre.org/feedback/mechanicalconcerns.php> on our website.

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**Brian from Woodbridge, VA** asks:

I fought in Vietnam. I do not appreciate you calling Veteran's Day a "lesser" holiday.

**VRE Management:**

I'm a veteran too. No disrespect intended. From now on we will refer to these as "soft" holidays, since not everyone gets the day off from work.

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**Al from Manassas, VA** asks:

Where are the 3 locomotives that you said you were leasing this summer?

**VRE Management:**

It took a while for us to get the agreement approved and signed. We expect to have them in service by the end of the year.

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**Deb** from **Spotsy** asks:

For 2 months now the Fredericksburg riders have been waiting for someone to clean up the station of the urine and feces matter. When will this be taken care of?

**VRE Management:**

I wish I could say that this is something that we could solve. However, this is under the jurisdiction of the City of Fredericksburg. We will continue to work with them on this issue.

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**Deb** from **Spotsy** asks:

We were told the news station were telling people it was not a person, but a deer.

**VRE Management:**

Good information is hard to come by. There is a rumor that a deer may have been involved as well. However, we do not know the exact circumstances.

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**Elaine** from **Arlington, VA** asks:

I just started taking the VRE from the Alexandria station to Union station & just want to say how much more I enjoy taking the VRE as opposed to Metro. The ride is usually quieter and much more relaxing since I am not dealing with such large numbers of people. The delays have been a problem sometimes in the AM, but, so far, I have found the VRE to be a good form of transportation. I live about 2 miles from the Alexandria station & work right next to union station, so am very fortunate that I am able to take the VRE. BTW, I do pay more to take the VRE, but it has been worth it.

**VRE Management:**

I love ending on a happy note. Thanks for sharing your experience. :)

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**VRE Management:**

Seems like my time is up. Our next forum is scheduled for December 5. Until then, have a appy Thanksgiving and don't eat too much turkey.

Dale

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