

Virginia Railway Express

Let's Talk!

The next VRE online forum will start on Wednesday, July 2nd at 12 noon.



There are currently 47 questions waiting to be answered.

VRE Management:

Hello everyone!

Thank you for "tuning" in. I want to get right down to business. On to the questions!

Michael from Manassas Park. asks:

If you look at the daily download over the past month, there have been several days when #337 is delayed because of "late arriving equipment". It is becoming very frustrating to constantly be late because of problems with VRE #327 being held up and creating a domino effect with #338 and #337. This has become very inefficient over the past month. What is VRE's plan to rectify this trend?

VRE Management:

The situation is being monitored. The past month's OTP was affected by a variety of factors including weather and rail traffic we usually don't see. If we get funding for a later evening train on the Manassas line, train 338 will be able to turn for "train 339." This will eliminate delays to 337.

Jim from Manassas Park, VA asks:

With future funding, can trains along the Manassas and Fredericksburg lines run throughout the day (every 30 minutes) to connect to the metro stations - Van Dorn St or King St for Manassas line and Springfield for Fredericksburg line?

VRE Management:

I don't think we will be in a position to do this in the near future.

Jason from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Will CSX ever upgrade the bridge over the Potomac River to three tracks?

VRE Management:

There are no plans to add a third track to Long Bridge (the bridge over the Potomac)

Steve from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

Beyond heat delays, are there any standing slow-orders from CSX on the Fredericksburg line? The trips seem to be taking longer lately, especially south of Quantico.

VRE Management:

There are no standing slow orders, but with all the improvements that our service area is seeing, it is common to see new slow orders until the tracks have "settled."

Rob from Broad Run asks:

In some of the new train cars, when you push the button to flush the toilet, the toilet splashes back at you. I was standing at the door and got sprayed from there. I can't stand back far enough. Also why are some of the toilets white, and some stainless steel colored?

VRE Management:

The white toilets are in the new cars and the stainless ones are in the older cars. No toilet should "spray" you. Please submit a Train Information Form with the car number and we will fix it. The form can be found at <http://www.vre.org/feedback/mechanicalconcerns.php> on our web site.

Davin from Woodbridge, VA asks:

What happened to the VRE trip planner? The homepage says it's unavailable, but if you go to <http://www.vre.org/transitplanner/index.html> it's there and working. MARC & METRO have teamed up with Google Maps. Is VRE going to do this?

VRE Management:

Because Metro's Ride Guide includes VRE and is a more robust system, we have opted to point potential riders to Metro's web site. In the meanwhile, we have been in discussion with Google to be a part of a regional trip planning system.

Rich Metzinger from Burke, VA asks:

On this morning's train, the conductor once again mentioned that there would be no service on July 4th. Many years ago during the early years, say circa 1993-94, I recall that VRE offered at least one train on the Manassas line on July 4th for service all the way to Union Station and back following the conclusion of the fireworks. At that time, gasoline was about \$1.75/gallon for regular (in today's dollars). Now with gasoline at nearly \$4.15 /gallon for regular, wouldn't it have been a nice touch (as well as very relevant and socially responsible) to offer this service once more, especially after VRE recently again raised their fares?

VRE Management:

Since 9/11, ridership has decreased steadily on July 4th, mainly because of the additional security precautions on the Mall during the events. We have not received many emails requesting excursion service. Unfortunately, there is not enough demand to justify operating trains on this holiday.

John from Burke VA asks:

The VRE website used to have a chart showing monthly ridership statistics. I don't think you do that anymore. Any chance of bringing it back?

VRE Management:

It still does! If you put your mouse over the word "about" located next to the search bar on our home page, there is a drop-down list which includes a link to performance measures.

Len Tabacchi from Manassas Park, VA asks:

Now my question, Parking at the the Manassas Park VRE station is very tight. Many days the lot is filled when the 330 train departs. There are then no spaces available for riders on the 332 train. Is Manassas Park scheduled to get a parking garage? If so, when? If not, what has to be done, by who, to make it happen? How long would expect it take to plan, fund, and build a parking garage at the Manassas Park VRE station?

VRE Management:

Currently, there are no plans for a garage in Manassas Park. The main reason is funding -- garages are expensive. Even with funding, it would take three to five years to complete due to environmental permits, design and construction. The new garage in Manassas may be an option for you starting later this month.

Melissa from Manassas, VA asks:

I recently moved to Virginia and am a new rider on the VRE. I believe the last southbound train leaves Crystal City, VA at 7:00; however, I was wondering if there are any plans to extend that time? The MARC train has one that leaves the city after 10:00 pm. I think this would be great for those riders who would like to go out for dinner

or drinks after work but have to stick to a tight train schedule. Just something to consider. Thanks!

VRE Management:

Welcome! We will add later service when funding becomes available.

from **Woodbridge** asks:

Can you please post signs at the garage in Woodbridge for people to turn their lights on when they are leaving the garage? I have almost been hit a few times because I have not seen the other cars. My lights are always on when I am leaving the garage. Thanks.

VRE Management:

We can issue safety reminders on this.

Diane from **Woodbridge** asks:

There is graffiti on the VRE sign at the exit from the Rippon parking lot. The n has been converted into a double ff. Now it says Rippoff. It has been there for many months.

VRE Management:

Thanks for letting me know. I'll look into getting that fixed.

Marie from **Manassas Park, VA** asks:

Has there been any news from the Governor's special session on transportation?

VRE Management:

No good news yet. They go back into session on July 9th.

NRM from **Manassas** asks:

Will the new Manassas parking garage be open to use as a viewing platform for the fireworks on July 4th?

VRE Management:

The garage will not be open in time to be able to view fireworks for the 4th.

carl from **fredericksburg** asks:

could you have the conductor have people move to the inside seat to free up seat closer to the aisle.

VRE Management:

This is more of a courtesy issue. A request from a fellow rider.

nick from **bristow, va** asks:

I normally ride train 327 in the afternoon and it is late on a regular basis (more than 5 minutes). I have noticed that in certain areas (between Manassas Park and Burke Center, Backlick Rd and Alexandria) the train runs at a significantly slower speed in the afternoon than it does in the morning. Why is it that morning trains run at faster speeds and are on time and afternoon trains move slower and not on time?

VRE Management:

There should be no reason a train travels slower in the same area in the evening versus the morning. However, there has been more evening delays this past month.

Brad from **Fredericksburg, VA** asks:

It seems as though afternoon on-time performance on the Frederickburg line has been fairly low of late. I may be in the minority, but it is most frustrating to arrive home late after a long day, day in and day out. What has happened?

VRE Management:

This past month's storms and rail traffic congestion, factors which are out of our control, really affected our OTP. We do everything we can to minimize these delays by evaluating when these events happen and improve for next time the situation occurs.

Shaking in my seat from **Brooke** asks:

How about designating a car or two on each train where the temperature is actually above freezing and letting us know which cars they are (similar to the Quiet Cars) so we can ride in those and actually enjoy the ride? Likewise you could designate the cooler cars too for the warm-blooded to take advantage of. When it comes to temperature there really is no happy medium. Some of us are very cold while others roast.

VRE Management:

Because of the complaints we had about the older cars being too hot, we made sure that the newer cars would be cooler. I have seen a lot of comments on the cooler temperatures in the new cars. I can't seem to win on this one.

Arash from **Fairfax, VA** asks:

any plan to add more seating capacity or more train schedules?

VRE Management:

I've noticed both of your questions. Ridership is up and trains are more crowded. However, there are usually seats available on cars at each end of a train. Having said that, I know that riders select their car for a variety of reasons, including where the car stops on the platform. Our ability to add train cars is limited by capacity in our mid-day storage yard.

Kevin from **fredericksburg, va** asks:

why there no place to lock up motorcycle to keep them from being stolen.

VRE Management:

We will be providing motorcycle parking at Fredericksburg, Brooke, Leeland Road and Broad Run as a pilot project. However, it will not be secured parking.

E from **brooke, va** asks:

i ride the train 303. and there a passager that take his shoes off everyday can you ask people to keep there shoes on..

VRE Management:

If they don't smell, it shouldn't be a problem. I am a person who takes his shoes off during the day and I get comments about it all the time. But, I've never been told my feet stink.

d-fresh from **manassas park** asks:

I rode train 300 from woodbridge this AM, and there was some dude watching a porno flick on his ipod (6am is way to early for this i think). any rules regarding these matters on the train? the woman next to him looked pretty uncomfortable. Even so, i was amused by the situation

VRE Management:

Another interesting story! I'm glad you were amused, but I am sure not everyone would be. If you find this situation objectionable, please speak to a conductor.

Mike B. from **Gainesville, VA** asks:

Are the speed of the trains limited by CRX; anyway to make the trip from Broadrun to Union Station faster?

VRE Management:

The rail from Broad Run to south of Alexandria is owned by Norfolk Southern. Regardless of who owns the tracks, with the amount of stops our service has, we would never benefit from high speed rail you see on Amtrak's Acela or trains in Japan or Europe.

Happy VRE rider from Manassas, VA asks:

Manassas parking garage - Can you please update us on the status of availability? Thank you.

VRE Management:

The parking garage should be open by the end of July.

Nancy from Quantico, VA asks:

Does the handicapped section on the platforms have to be in the smoking section. We are already handicapped, we don't need to get lung cancer, too. I don't know if this is true for all of the stations, but it is true for Crystal City. also, does the loading for the handicapped have to be at the far end of the platform? Thanks

VRE Management:

Once we have all the new rail cars in service, which all have lifts, I will reevaluate the policy of where to board handicapped passengers in relation to the smoking section.

Phil from Fredericksburg VA asks:

As I recall, the 12:55 PM train southbound to Fredericksburg started as a one day a week passenger van/bus service from Springfield Metro. As a test of demand, would it possible to start a one or two day a week similar service from Springfield, equivalent to a train leaving Union Station at about 7:30 or so? You wouldn't have to make a major financial commitment, just chartering the service for a few months to see demand. Also, given that the BRACC is relocating jobs to Quantico, isn't an early VRE south warranted in the near future?

VRE Management:

Amtrak has a train leaving Union Station at 7:30a stopping at Alexandria, Franconia/Springfield, Quantico and Fredericksburg. VRE passengers with multi-ride and Step-up tickets can use this train for a morning reverse commute. VRE ridership on this train remains low.

EMS Provider from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

I must admit that recently I have had to take the train on several occasions and it does appear that your service is getting a little better. Your prices still are very high. The Fred bus helps, but that also adds \$40+ more a month to an already high train ticket. What are you doing about creating parking garages. Wasn't there one going to be built on Sofia street?

VRE Management:

The City of Fredericksburg as well as its citizens do not want add more VRE parking in the downtown area. The best solution we see is for Spotsylvania to join the VRE and add a station, with ample parking.

Ed from Fredericksburg asks:

Are the new leased locomotives in service yet? I noticed V35 was the lead locomotive on train 307 on Monday. According to the daily download there were HEP problems with this train though. Are there still more kinks to work out, or are they in full service now?

VRE Management:

Yes. V35 and V36 are both having electrical problems. They should be in revenue service soon.

Grace Melnik from Manassas, VA asks:

I see at some stops like Alexandria step boxes are put out. Please address step boxes being put out at the Crystal City stop. Thanking you in advance, GM

VRE Management:

The step boxes are at Alexandria because it is low platform station. If you need extra help detraining at Crystal City, please do so at a car with conductor so they can assist you.

Deb from **Stafford, VA** asks:

I have two requests for my fellow passengers in the interest of courtesy and consideration: - Please be mindful of the bulky backpacks and shoulder bags. So many times I have been knocked in the head as you pass by boarding or unboarding. - Please monitor the volume on your earphones. Just because it is a small speaker snugly fitting inside your ear, doesn't mean those sitting next to and around you can not hear it. And if you are asked to lower the volume, "check" your resulting attitude and keep your dirty looks to yourself. I know ALL your fellow passengers will be thankful.

VRE Management:

Another courtesy reminder from a fellow passenger.

Marie from **Rippon** asks:

I appreciate the alternative to stressful 95 traffic and ever increasing gas bills.

VRE Management:

We are happy to provide our service as an alternative.

Karen from **Spotsylvania, VA** asks:

Hello! First, kudos on initiating the FRED shuttle service - excellent idea! Second, any possibility of the step-up ticket for Amtrak being reduced? I thought I read somewhere that this was being considered. Thanks!

VRE Management:

You should thank the City of Fredericksburg for FRED. About the Amtrak Step-Ups, we have approached them about reducing it.

Debra from **Quantico** asks:

Are there any pending plans to adjust the morning or evening schedules. Thanks

VRE Management:

Plans are dependent on when we can get additional funding.

Blair from **Cherry Hill NJ** asks:

Is there going to be a special to the July 4th fireworks?

VRE Management:

Unfortunately, there will be no Fireworks Express this year.

JP from **Ashamed in Bristow** asks:

Not a question, just a comment. I received an email from a friend who recently took the VRE with her family for a day of sightseeing. She told me that the "commuter guys" (as she put it) were exceptionally rude to her and her family; giving them dirty looks, making comments about them, etc. Just because we may ride day in, day out - it doesn't give us license to act like we own the place. A little consideration and an accommodating attitude can go a long way.

VRE Management:

It is a shame when our riders are rude to one another. In years past, we used to get compliments from new riders on how nice and friendly our regular riders were. It would be great if all of our newer riders could feel as welcome as our regular riders felt when they started riding our trains.

John from **Quantico, VA** asks:

I sit in the rear of the new cars (the last car or the car) on the quiet car and the exit door continues to open throughout the train ride to Union Station. How can this be fixed or stopped? Several other riders have complained about this as well.

VRE Management:

Please send us the train and car number in a Train Information Form so that our mechanical crews can address it. The form is located at <http://www.vre.org/feedback/mechanicalconcerns.php> on our web site.

Johnny from **Fredericksburg, VA** asks:

Any rules on drinking (Booze) on the train?

VRE Management:

Yes! It's not allowed. If you see it, talk to the conductor.

Marie from **Manassas Park, VA** asks:

Just a comment: LOVE the new cars!! As for them being too cool, I disagree and like them just as they are. I can always add a jacket, but when it's hot there's only so much clothing one can remove. :)

VRE Management:

There's always more than one opinion on this subject!

Paul from **Bristow** asks:

For those who are freezing in the new cars choose: a. A jacket b. Me in my underwear

VRE Management:

No, offense Paul. But, I don't want that visual. . .

VRE Management:

It seems that you are all ready for vacation. We had a little fun with the answers today, but I don't want you to think that we do not take your questions seriously. I feel that a little humor goes a long way. I hope you agree. Seriously, have a great 4th. See you in August, Dale!

Copyright © 2005 // Virginia Railway Express