

Let's Talk!

The next VRE online forum will start on Wednesday, May 4th at 12:00pm.



There are currently 65 questions waiting to be answered.

VRE Management:

Happy almost Cinco De Mayo. I have seen a lot of positive comments about the changes we made this week to our trainsets. I am glad that everyone is enjoying the extra elbow room. I am looking forward to answering our questions today, so let's get started.

Larry from Manassas, VA asks:

On the VRE website <http://vre.org/service/policies.html> under Service Information- Policies Aboard VRE Trains- listed are: Baggage | Bicycles | Food and Beverage | Smoking | Pets | Quiet Cars. Where do VRE passengers find the written Queuing policy on the VRE website?

VRE Management:

Before, we have addressed queuing as a courtesy issue but are moving towards making it a formal practice. We will continue to fine-tune the policy and update the website once final.

Max from Fredericksburg asks:

David Goble (302/303) is the best conductor I've seen in six years.

VRE Management:

Conductor Goble has shown on many occasions he puts the passenger first and am glad you have noticed. I will be sure to pass your compliments along to his supervisors.

Fredericksburg from Fredericksburg asks:

Dale first thing is first I am really impressed by the Fredericksburg line conductors all of whom go out of their way to make the trip as safe and easy as possible. I really would like to thank the crew of the 312/313 and 304/305 both crews have been nothing but professional in doing their job and the way they handle customers but since these are the trains I ride daily I kinda have a one sided opinion since i don't get to ride the rest of the Fredericksburg line trains. SO I really just want to say thank you and keep up the good work. P.s. My hat goes of to Wayne and John of the 312/313.

VRE Management:

I am impressed by the crews' dedication to safety as well as their dedication to improve the customer experience. I will share your kudos with Keolis management so everyone gets their proper recognition.

Dave from Alexandria, VA asks:

A big thank you for adding a car to Train 313 - it was desperately needed. When VRE chose to purchase new rolling stock, why did it choose the Gallery-style cars instead of a style that had a full 2nd level - and presumably more seats? I heard something about the the reason being that it would be easier for conductors to check tickets on a Gallery-style cars, but that doesn't sound like a very compelling argument, especially since many conductors currently walk up to the 2nd level on the Gallery cars to check tickets anyways.

VRE Management:

Believe it or not, the new Gallery cars without a restroom have the same number of seats as our Kawasaki cars used to have. As with any procurement, we look at a number of things as apart of the bdding process. Nippon Sharyo is the company that won the bid.

Sara B. from Woodbridge asks:

Can you please remind everyone that if you are not getting off the train to be considerate and move out of the way in order for people to disembark. Thank you

VRE Management:

Sara B. kindly asking fellow riders to be aware of your surroundings.

Dave from Springfield, VA asks:

The Standing means Detraining policy is obviously not being enforced on the Fredericksburg line. I've observed people stand up for the next stop before the train leaves the station. Ex. People getting off at Woodbridge, stand up before we leave Lorton

VRE Management:

We are still working out the kinks and have not instituted this system wide but we will not be enforcing it when the train is still relatively crowded. On the Fredericksburg Line, it won't be crowded from Quantico south.

Jim from Alexandria VA asks:

What is the status on the replacement of the older locomotives with the new ones? How many

trains still run with old locomotives and will you keep some after all of them are replaced with new ones?

VRE Management:

Four out of the five trainsets on the Manassas Line have a new locomotive. Five out of the seven on the Fredericksburg Line have a new locomotive. We have sold all of our older locomotives with the exception of two and I am hoping to find a buyer for those ones as well.

Ron from Bristow, VA asks:

Seems like we have not been affected by efficiency testing for a very long time. Are those tests no longer conducted?

VRE Management:

Efficiency test can be done in a number of different ways. Its nice to see that Keolis is performing these tests that is mindful of on-time performance.

Jim from Fred asks:

Hello, First off thank you for the addition of another car to train 300 as well as having new cars on the entire set. I wanted to ask about the policy on riding and standing in the vestibules. I ride train 303 in the afternoons and see the same individuals queuing and standing in the vestibules way before their stop. They also seem to use the stairs as seats when there are actual seats available to use and cause delays in getting off the train from people actually sitting in the upper seats.

VRE Management:

I am glad you can take advantage of the additional car and more seats but I must warn you that the new cars are only temporary and I expect 300 to return to the legacy cars in a few weeks. As for the queuing issue, we are working to make a formal policy on queuing since our trains are more crowded than ever and as ridership grows everyday, will continue to grow as a problem.

Nancy from Burke, VA asks:

Not a question--just a compliment. It is sooo reassuring to be able to count on the morning train arriving on time.(Most of the time.) I love it! Also, I really appreciate the friendliness and professionalism of the conductors on my trains. They are doing a great job.

VRE Management:

Thank you for the compliment. I am glad to see our hard work has paid off.

Davin from Woodbridge, VA asks:

I ride Train #307 and notice recently that the conductors having been announcing which 3 cars don't make the platform at Fraconia/Springfield and the other stations south. This is important for new riders to know

VRE Management:

Davin, please clarify that you meant have NOT been announcing making these announcements. If that is the case, I will talk with Keolis about reinforcing this customer service technique.

Kate from Manassas Park asks:

Hellooooo?? I am down here! The pothole in Manassas Park has swallowed me and my Prius. Can you send help and patch this hole?

VRE Management:

Sorry about that, Kate. I will work with Manassas Park on this.

Cristina from Centreville, VA asks:

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU! Thank you so much for adding TWO extra cars to Manassas 329. I have to praise VRE for listening to their customers. I have only been riding for 3 months, but the difference between VRE or bus on 66 and then metro are night and day! Thank you for changing my life! Now I get to pick up my kids on time, guaranteed!

VRE Management:

You're welcome, you're welcome, you're welcome.

Cindy from Fredericksburg asks:

I see that the new step up pricing is in effect. I have a couple of older \$10 step up tickets. I saw that you had mentioned an exchange program for the newer fair tickets. When will the info for this be made available and where will it be located?

VRE Management:

You can do it in person at our next few Meet the Management events, where staff will be exchanging out tickets. You can also fill out our Ticket Exchange form which can be found at http://www.vre.org/service/pdf/tix_exchange.pdf .

Dan from Linton Hall, VA asks:

In last month's chat, you mentioned that a project to lengthen the platform at Broad Run is on the

horizon. Could you provide any more details on this? In particular, will the lengthening be to the south, toward the rail yard, or to the north, toward the airport? And will there be additional access points to the parking lots created as part of the project? If the lengthening is to the north (away from the parking lots), I'm not sure that there would really be much of any value in doing the project.

VRE Management:

Contractors have been selected. Work will start soon. We will extend the platform north. In addition, we're beginning the environmental and preliminary engineering work to build a parking deck at Broad Run. I've asked in the design that there be multiple entrances into the deck from the extended platform. So think of the platform as the first step to providing better access to the Broad Run platform.

dave from bristow asks:

I take the 327 home from Crystal City. The Fredericksburg train arrives minutes before. I have almost had heart attacks watching late Fredericksburg riders running across Crystal Drive against the light. Pleeeese be on the platform 5 minutes early and Pleeeese conductors, don't hold up the train for these slackers. I don't want to witness blood on the street.

VRE Management:

I know everyone gets tired of me saying that you need to be at the platform early. There is a method to my madness. I don't want to see anyone get hurt either.

Marc from Fredericksburg asks:

Just a note of thanks. With the reduced amtrack step up fee and the increase of cars on the fredericksburg morning express, my life has definately improved. Thanks again.

VRE Management:

My pleasure. We aren't done yet and continue to look for more ways to increase service as we estimate our ridership will continue to grow.

George from Manassas asks:

Things are really improving (327 went from worst to first)! Would you please include two courtesy reminders? Please don't be loud. If it's wrong to talk loudly to someone on your cell phone, the same is true talking with someone across the car. Try the voice you use when you DON'T want others to hear. Please wait your turn. You wouldn't dare cut ahead of people going to a concert or the game (you'd be hurt) so don't do it to those waiting for the train. Thanks, it's so much better coming from you.

VRE Management:

It might sound better coming from me but I couldn't put it any better myself.

The Dude from Manassas Park asks:

Why does train 327, a 6 car train, pull all the way to the south end of the platform at Manassas Park which is a 7 car platform? This causes the folks that get off to have to walk halfway back down the platform to get to an entrance. I know several people addressed this issue to you at the Meet the Management in Crystal City and still, the train keeps stopping long.

VRE Management:

I will look into this with Keolis.

Ken from Burke asks:

Recently, a train was delayed for inspection after hitting a deer. Considering that's not a rare occurrence, what kind of inspection is done? Does VRE have to submit reports to the VA and Fed authorities?

VRE Management:

If a train hits a deer or other wildlife creature the crew conducts an inspection to ensure there was no damage to the train. There are no other reporting requirements. As you can imagine, with all the trains moving throughout this country, hitting animals is a pretty common occurrence.

Yolanda from Arlington, VA asks:

Q-1 Train 305 -Frederick - Lately has been smelling like raw sewage. Is there a reason this train is not cleaned on a regularly? This problem usually happens with the Frederick line most often. Thank you note: I appreciate that more carts have been added to the 4:37 Manassas Train leaving from Crystal City. It was nice to find a seat yesterday.

VRE Management:

I am very concerned about the toilets smelling on some trains. We have started a regular program of maintenance to prevent the smell occurring at all.

Thomas from Manassas asks:

Train 330 was delayed this morning we could hear the first announcement but the second one the conductor was talking way to soft. Still no idea what the delay was? Can you please ask the conductors to speak up and clearly. Thank you.

VRE Management:

Will do.

Mike from Leeland Road asks:

I read a couple of weeks ago in the paper that in Stafford County police are going to start ticketing car that are illegally parked in VDOT commuter lots. Any chance they will start ticketing at Leeland road. Every day there are lazy people parking illegal when there still plenty of spaces available in the back lot.

VRE Management:

Leeland Road is a VDOT maintained lot so I will ask our Safety and Security Manager address this with Stafford County.

Steve from Stafford, VA asks:

Can someone PLEASE, PLEASE (did I say please?) fix the vending machines at Brooke Station. One is completely down, one is near useless, and the other is quickly heading that same direction. The two "working" machines are extremely hard to use. Neither of their touch screens work well and both require a substantial amount of trial and frustration to purchase a ticket. Trains 302 and 303 have been excellent since the completion of track repairs; and of course David does a great job keeping us informed and entertained - thanks!

VRE Management:

I'll have the machines inspected and adjusted and fixed if necessary.

William from Manassas asks:

First, thanks for providing such a great commuting option! Second, I'm concerned about the wifi that you will be providing. It sounds like the new system will be quite expensive. How can you justify the cost? It seems that money should be going into other areas. Most people have their own internet connection these days anyway. Also, it seems the connection would quickly become saturated just by a few people watching videos. How will the on-train wifi handle several hundred connections? Thanks.

VRE Management:

No problem, William. WiFi will make a commuting option that much more appealing. I am looking at all the options and cost is definitely a concern. I know that user traffic issue is an issue that our IT Manager is working on.

Matt from Woodbridge, VA asks:

If VRE is able to park at Manassas Train at Broad Run, why not park another trainset at L'Enfant Plaza, freeing up more space at the Ivy City Yard?

VRE Management:

We will start using the L'Enfant storage track when a switch is placed on the north end. If you remember, last year after public hearing, riders did not trains terminating at L'Enfant. My plan now is to have all trains go to Union Station and one or two trains will reverse back into the storage track. I anticipate we will be able to do this in one year.

Gwen from Manassas, VA asks:

Can you set up a blog or forum on your website for carpooling to different VRE stations? This could help with the parking problems at some stations.

VRE Management:

While we don't have this on our website, we do have a Facebook page where you start a discussion about carpooling and network with other riders who use the same station as you.

Rick from Stafford asks:

Hi - I couldn't help but notice that at least 98% of the recent (last couple of months) difficulties VRE has been having on the F-brg line all point back to CSX in one way or another. Any chance of having a serious sit down with them again - to make sure all is being properly taken care of to reduce these delays. You, I and everyone else knows that as summer approaches these problems and delays will intensify - and everyone will wind up a bit grumpy for getting to their destinations later than scheduled. Thanks!

VRE Management:

Most of the delays recently have been due to track work which is nearly complete. All things considered I am anticipating a relatively smooth summer. In the meanwhile please know we work with CSX on a daily basis and given in the congestion in the corridor, they do a really good job.

Sam from Bristow, VA asks:

Any plans to accept SmartTrip cards instead of the antiquated punch cards?

VRE Management:

The regional SmarTrip card is not compatible with our fare collection system and since Metro, who is in charge of the project, uses a different vendor than us, progress for integration has been slow. Now it seems that SmarTrip technology is moving towards passé. We will continue identify the best and most economical options for our riders as we look at revamping our system

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

At the Broad Run Station in the newest parking lot created there are still blockades and generator run lights. The fixed light poles have been installed so I was wondering when the temporary lights were going to be removed to free up those parking spaces.

VRE Management:

I'll look into it.

M from **Rolling Road** asks:

Thanks for adding cars to 326! That's how you spell Relief!

VRE Management:

Thank you, but I am not done yet! We are continuing to pursue ways to add more relief to our overcrowded trains.

Matt from **Lorton, VA** asks:

Why is it after everyone boards the conductor still stands out on the platform making the train dwell for another minute instead of leaving right away?

VRE Management:

It depends on the situation. Most stations if the train arrives early, the crew must wait for the appointed time to leave I have seen this happen at Alexandria and a few other stations.

Greg from **Rippon** asks:

Why were the Consists for 302 and 306 switched? The VRE Train Consists page shows 302 with more passengers.

VRE Management:

The consist page only shows data from February (which I will make sure gets updated to the latest data), which was an off month. We analyzed all the months after we added the express train last summer (when we noticed the trend) to determine the consist changes. So far this week, we have shown we made the right switch for 302/306. We will continue to monitor ridership and make any necessary changes.

James from **Manassas, VA** asks:

Mr. Zehner: Love watching the new engines roll into the station. Thank you for making them

happen! The question I have, and have had for a long time, in the morning runs, the engines are in the rear of the train, in what I describe as 'pushing' the train forward (correct me if I am wrong in my terms). With the force of the engine pushing in the rear, how does the train not essentially de-rail? Thank you.

VRE Management:

I agree, James, they do look slick. Our trains are push/pull (you used the right terminology) and even though the motive power is generated in the back of the train while northbound, the cab car on the north end of the trains (also where the engineer sits while operating northbound) can do essentially everything the locomotive can do, except power the train.

Manassas from Manassas asks:

Why are full sized bikes being allowed on the 329?

VRE Management:

On the Manassas Line in the evening, full-size bikes are only allowed on 333, 335, and 337.

Greg from Rippon asks:

How does VRE come up with the # of passengers on each train? Do they do multiple counts? With some stations, such as Lorton, having large #'s of riders boarding and de-training, it seems like it would be difficult to get a accurate count. How often do they count? Every day? Every week?

VRE Management:

We do a head count after Alexandria for southbound trains and before Alexandria for northbound trains. Then we enter those numbers into a formula devised by data experts who rode the trains for months watching how many and where people get on and off the trains. This adjusts for people who detrain at Quantico, Lorton, Backlick, and any other station where people detrain before Alexandria.

Bob from Dumfries asks:

Dale: Just want to say many, many thanks for adding the car to F'burg 300! The train is still full but overcrowding has really eased.

VRE Management:

I am finding it difficult to find different ways to say you're welcome, so don't mention it. We continue to work to improve the customer experience.

Will from Broad Run asks:

I'm not looking for a huge fare increase, but I was looking over VRE's financials and found that (in very rough numbers) 25% of Revenues come from passenger tickets, 25% come from the state, 25% from the local coffers, and 25% from the federal coffers. Now, I'm a rider, so I benefit from the tax money going to VRE, but is it really right that so much of VRE's revenues are subsidized by taxes? I know the service takes cars off the road, but does this benefit really justify the taxpayer cost?

VRE Management:

Our operating expenses are covered 54% by fare revenue, 31% from local governments, and 15% from the state. Therefore, 85% of our operating costs are covered by the passenger and the local governments that own VRE. The capital budget is funded by state and federal grants.

Ray from Gainesville, Va asks:

At Meet the Mgmt I was told that 327 and 329 would have additional cars. So far no additional cars. Lots of people standing. When will new cars be added?

VRE Management:

I apologize if you were partially misinformed. Train 329 and 326 received two new cars this week. At this time, I do not see 327 getting any additional cars.

Mark from Burke, VA asks:

The diamond tread floor in almost every single car is still covered in winter grime. The stairs are particularly bad. When will this be cleaned?

VRE Management:

Do you notice this on more than one train? In any case, please email gotrains@vre.org with specific car numbers to make sure they get taken care of. In the meantime, I will tell our Director of Rail Equipment to make sure the all floors are clean.

Greg from Rippon asks:

When trains board from smaller platforms, such as the metro side at Springfield, is there a reason that passengers must board at the last 2 cars? That ends up causing the last 2 cars to become overcrowded when there are still seats available elsewhere.

VRE Management:

I will work with Keolis to address the issue and come up with the best way to platform the train when on the Metro side at Springfield.

Donna from **Brooke** asks:

Great job by Keolis and the new crews. A scheduling question - why is there such a lag (45 mins) between trains 308 and 310? Most of the other wait times seem to be in the 25 min vicinity.

VRE Management:

The difference in schedule between 308 and 310 is due to an Amtrak train that is operating in between the two.

Joyce from **Manassas, VA** asks:

I have poor to no internet reception on the Manassas line train. I use a Verizon wireless modem, yet the reception is non-existent or I am disconnected every few minutes during the train ride. Am I the only one having this problem? Is there something VRE can do to make wireless internet more accessible? Much appreciate any help. Joyce

VRE Management:

I know of a deadspot for most cell phone services in the Clifton area of the Manassas Line but am not aware of a continuous issue for Verizon. We'll see what other riders have to say.

John from **Virginia** asks:

I have given up on VRE. I will ride VRE when absolutely necessary, but refuse to purchase a monthly pass and ride daily anymore. I am currently driving a car pool, and looking at van pool options now. Service on VRE is going downhill. Ticket is too expensive to be treated like this!!

VRE Management:

I know VRE can't be everything to everyone and I am sorry we did not meet your expectations.

Terry from **Fredericksburg** asks:

Is VRE ever going to add an extra car to train #305

VRE Management:

No immediate plans, but you can never say never. I am working towards adding more seats when and where I can.

Marc from **Fredericksburg** asks:

I know there has been a hold up with putting the Wi-Fi in on the trains. Amtrak has Wi-Fi on their trains, why don't you use the system they do? What is the status?

VRE Management:

Amtrak has WiFi on some of their trains only on the Northeast Corridor and we have talked to Amtrak about their system and who provides it. Any system that we buy must be competitively purchased.

JEFF from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

I currently use paper 'Smart Benefit Vouchers' toward the purchase of my VRE Monthly. Employer says these paper vouchers to be discontinued & an electronic "process" to start in a month. Q. How will VRE continue to accept employer contributions toward VRE monthly tickets when the current process changes ??

VRE Management:

We currently have a process in place to use SmartBenefits through CommuterDirect. We are also testing a system at the Woodbridge station. For more information, please visit commuterdirect.com

Kelly from Stafford asks:

Why does it cost the same for me to go to Alexandria as it does someone to go one stop further, Crystal City.

VRE Management:

Our fares are zone based. Each zone corresponds to a certain distance from DC. Alexandria and Crystal City fall into the same zone and are the same price.

Dave from Fredericksburg asks:

Would you consider putting a stairway to the street on the south side of the FBG station? A majority of riders have to walk to the satellite lots, and an extra way to exit the station (like the locals have) would be nice.

VRE Management:

A few years we attempted to do this but could not gain easements across the private property to allow the stairways.

from **Woodbridge** asks:

A few weeks ago there was a car that was broken into and sat there for at least a week. The car

has since left the garage but where it was parked, the glass shards remain. What is VRE going to do about it? It is on the 2nd level in spaces 144, 143, 142, etc...

VRE Management:

I'll take care of it.

Sha from Bristow VA asks:

Could you go back to making the announcement about the quiet car (both passengers and conductors seem to have forgotten that there is one). It might also help if you could put the quiet car signs on ALL the windows. Thanks.

VRE Management:

I will ask the conductors to make the announcement as well as enforce the Quiet Car rules.

Tammy from Springfield asks:

Several times I have noticed a woman at L'Enfant in the afternoons, waiting to board #327, with a monthly pass clipped to her shirt for travel between zones 2-6. Obviously she's too cheap to pay the full fare like the rest of us. In the "old days", the conductors used come through a 2nd time in the mornings after we dropped off the Crystal City crowd, and verified that everyone going into zone 1 had a valid ticket. That isn't done anymore, & at least this person is taking advantage of that fact. Can your conductors make sure that everyone traveling to zone 1 has paid the full fare?

VRE Management:

I will ask the conductors to make sure everyone is paying their "fare" share.

Susan from Burke, VA asks:

Help - parking at the Rolling Rd. station is becoming jam packed - so many of us on the last train have to park on the Burke Rd. shoulder. It is dangerous - both pulling in, parking there (the traffic whooshes by), and departing. When will this growing problem be addressed?

VRE Management:

Currently there are no plans to expand the parking at Rolling Road. It has been made clear by the neighborhood they do not want additional parking there. My suggestion is to use the Burke garage with over 1,000 spaces.

Donna from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

I travel to Lorton Station from Fredericksburg and have done so for over 8 years. I would like to

know about the lighting in the Lorton Parking Lot. In the evenings and morning, during the winter months it is very dark and potentially dangerous with snow and ice in the parking lot. The areas are very slippery. I know the lot belongs to the county but can't something be done?

VRE Management:

The portion of Lorton that has no lights is actually owned by a private developer but was paved by Fairfax County. This issue has been brought to the county's attention in the past and I will bring it up again.

Jamie from Fredericksburg, VA asks:

Good afternoon Mr.Zehner, I have a concern about the "old gallery cars", when VRE is planning to replace those uncomfortable cars?, since there is not lavatory, doors are not automatic and too hard to open by hand, A/C so so, and so on. By the way, i hope i am not wrong, but i have seen that Manassas line uses only new cars, are fredericksburg riders being discriminated? Thanks for your response.

VRE Management:

Hopefully I'll be able to start the procurement process to purchase 15 new Gallery cars to replace the 20 old Gallery cars in service. I anticipate this will take 2 years. The legacy cars will be around for awhile, but we will be sure to share the love for them between both lines.

robert from lorton asks:

What's happened about restricting full sized bike? Train 309 simply has no room for them. According to your website the train is at 121% of capacity (819 seats for 973 riders)for midweek ridership. Also thanks for adding the cars but it seems they really didn't go where they are needed. I compared the load factors from before verses now from your website and the 304/309 set could have benefited from a single additional car.

VRE Management:

There was equal support on both sides of the issue, so it was tabled until summer. We are looking ways to accommodate bicycles for use in our system as well as addressing the overcrowding, such as bike lockers at the stations.

CJ from Woodbridge, VA asks:

Love the new cars and added cars in the morning trip 300.

VRE Management:

No worries mate! Glad you are happy.

Paul from Ashland asks:

Are there any plans to expand the F'burg line further south, to say Ashland?

VRE Management:

We are not planning on going any further south than Spotsylvania at this time.

Dave from Gainesville, VA asks:

For The Dude from Manassas Park: your fellow Manassas line passengers going to Broad Run get a hearty chuckle everytime anyone from your station complains about not stopping near an entrance. With multiple entrances and a linear parking lot design, you will always be much closer to your car than 90 percent of Broad Run riders, regardless of where the train stops. Sheesh.

VRE Management:

It's all a matter of perspective. I am sure our Fredericksburg station riders that a couple of hundred feet is not much to quibble about.

Clay McDonald from Manassas, VA asks:

For all of us VRE fans, has VRE thought about running an online VRE store for us to purchase VRE collectibles?

VRE Management:

We used to have merchandise available on our website but did not get a lot of interest. If you would like to purchase a t-shirt or coffee mug, please call 703-684-1001 and ask to speak to Ann King.

VRE Management:

As Porky Pig would say, that's all folks. Thank for the compliments on the expanded trains. For riders that uses stations that have Amtrak, don;t forget that the Step-Up have been reduced to \$5. For Franconia/Springfield riders, Meet the Management is this afternoon. In addition to VRE management and staff, Keolis will have a few folks there as well.
