

## Let's Talk!

The next VRE online forum will start on Tuesday, November 1st at 12:00pm.



There are currently 46 questions waiting to be answered.

### **VRE Management:**

Now that everyone has come down from their sugar high, I hope you are having a happy Tuesday. I hope I am not jinxing things, our on-time performance in October was the highest it has ever been. I am looking forward to a similiar month in November. Now, on to the questions!

---

### **Jan from Fredericksburg asks:**

Going on 6 years I've been using VRE - Gets better every year. Thanks. Just a fun question that I've been wondering about. Does anyone ever sleep past the last station and end up at the yard or storage area? What to you do in those cases?

### **VRE Management:**

Thanks for the loyal patronage, Jan. Sleeping passengers are turned into Lost&Found and donated to charity if no one claims within 30 days. But seriously, the conductors sweep the trains before they depart the last destination station, exactly for that reason; to make sure everyone has detrained.

---

### **Tired on 300 from Fredericksburg, Va asks:**

I take the 300 and it's always been quiet. In May when the new cars arrived, our side (2nd half of the 2nd car from the front) received the loud and disrespectful "Woodbridge Gang". They have become impossible to deal with and a few think it's a game. To respect and help us 'early birds' please consider changing the 300 to a "Quiet Train". Quiet doesn't mean silent (and we understand that), but quiet does allow for us who sleep, read books, or do work to be left in peace and not hear the "JJ laugh" and conversations from 8 aisles away. Please helps us, its gets worse every morning.

### **VRE Management:**

Unfortunately, we do not have plans to make 300 a Quiet Train. As popular as the Quiet Car feature is, we do not have any plans to expand it beyond what it already is. The only recourse is to nicely ask the "gang" to tone it down or consider moving to another car.

---

**Michelin** from **Manassas Park** asks:

Please Please fill the potholes at MP! Please Please fill the potholes at MP! Please Please fill the potholes at MP!

**VRE Management:**

I will ask our Facilities Superintendent to look into the potholes at Manassas Park.

---

**John** from **Fredericksburg** asks:

The last seat notice hinted that electronic Smart Benefits can now be used at local ticket vendors (e.g. Deacon Road 7-11) vice Commuter Direct. Can you expand on how this would work?

**VRE Management:**

If you don't use CommuterDirect to receive tickets through the mail and would like to go use the 7-11 on Deacon Road to get your tickets with SmartBenefits, you need to designate Virginia Railway Express – Leeland Road on the WMATA website as the place you would like to redeem your benefits. If you have more questions please contact us or WMATA.

---

**Hesham** from **Woodbridge VA** asks:

Is there is a plan to extend the service later at night , so the last train can leave dc at 10:00PM, as sometimes we have to work long hours or have social events to attend. Thanks for all the hard work and great service we receive at VRE.

**VRE Management:**

Right now that is not in the cards due to financial issues.

---

**Jo-Jo** from **Bristow, VA** asks:

Hi, Can you add a train on Friday on the Southbound Manassas line between the 1:33 pm and the 4:04? The 4:04 is too crowded. VRE is doing a great job. The ride is pleasant and so are conductors.

**VRE Management:**

This is not in the cards either. However, I know when I am in a position to add more service, this would be a popular choice.

---

**Peter** from **Leeland** asks:

When is Dave coming back. The 303 is not the same without him. We get no updates. Dave is the man and we miss him.

**VRE Management:**

Dave is doing well and is anxious to return back to the trains. Hopefully you will see him soon.

---

**Tony from Burke, VA** asks:

When the next oak leaf oil incident occurs (let's have a plan, please), rather than await the arrival of a second train to push, have you considered backing up the train and starting again, so the train may have enough momentum to clear the slick patch? Yes, it takes time for the engineer to run between the ends of the train, but that's got to be faster than waiting for another engine. Hitting the patch coming out of Rolling Road at such a slow speed could be the problem. Have you ever tried this approach?

**VRE Management:**

Yes, we have tried this approach in the past. However, our new locomotives seem to be handling the leaf oil issues better than the old ones did and we have seen minimal problems. In addition, we are regularly dumping sand in the tracks as we go by in an effort to improve traction.

---

**William from Manassas Park** asks:

I get on in Alexandria on the way home and the train is often very crowded. There are always a few people that sit on the aisle seat, while the window seat is empty. If I ask to sit there, they act as if I am completely inconveniencing them. What can be done about these seat hogs?

**VRE Management:**

Please see the conductor. He'll take care of it for you.

---

**George from Manassas** asks:

Just an FYI from an earlier forum. The gutters on the new north platform in Manassas still leak at the joints. I don't know if they attempted repair but they are still leaking. What's wet now will be ice patches shortly.

**VRE Management:**

I will check into this again and will get it repaired.

---

**Manassas from Manassas VA** asks:

Please play the reminder of limited cell phone usage recording more often? I have noticed that more riders are talking for the whole trip. I don't mind a 15 minute conversation but the hour?

**VRE Management:**

Will do.

---

**James from Manassas** asks:

Everyday 329 is near standing room only by the time it reaches Crystal city, but 331 has plenty of room, is there any way of switching a car from 331 and putting it on 329? Also, is there anything you can do about trucks parking in the compact car spots at broad run?

**VRE Management:**

Both trains have 8 car sets which is the most we can have at this point in time. As for the trucks in the compact spots, we have asked Prince William to take these down but have elected to keep them up.

---

**Allison from Bristow, VA** asks:

I love riding the VRE. The staff is friendly and helpful. However, I lately I have noticed more riders putting their feet in the seats, leaving newspapers, empty cans, bottles and trash in the seats and in the cup holders. Can you have the conductors make announcements for people to take their trash with them and dispose properly. Tell your staff to keep up the good job!

**VRE Management:**

It is very important to me for our trains to remain clean. We allow drinking and eating but rely heavily on the passengers to police themselves. We will continue to emphasize these points in our courtesy campaigns and with our conductors.

---

**James from Manassas VA** asks:

This issues has been raised before. However, the issuing of a court summons @\$181.00 has taken on a life of its on on the 3:50 Manassas line Especially yesterday. The VRE position is:(1)The Virginia legislature passed the requirement.(2)The VRE cannot determine the validity of the individuals position. With todays technology an APP may/could resovle some of this ticket validating issues. If I may I would like to talk with a VRE rep on this matter, especially concerning a specfic conductor. I do not believe the conductor's approach or attitide with riders shows any respect and lacks manners.

**VRE Management:**

Issuing citations is the best way to enforce everyone paying their fair share. If you would like to speak to someone regarding your concerns, please call April Maguigad at 703-684-1001.

---

**Heather from Woodbridge, VA** asks:

Will there be Santa Trains this year? And if so when are where will the schedules be posted?  
Thank you

**VRE Management:**

Yes. Still waiting for confirmation from our host railroads. We'll post the information as soon as it's available. We are planning to do it on December 10th.

---

**Gretchen from Woodbridge, VA asks:**

Is a new VRE station planned for Woodbridge? If so, where will it be located? Thank you.

**VRE Management:**

There is a future station planned for the Cherry Hill area of Prince William County.

---

**Ron from Bristow, VA asks:**

Are there video cameras in the Union Station tunnel so "K" Tower can monitor what's going on when there is a delay or train malfunction?

**VRE Management:**

No cameras but they monitor the tracks and will see if something is stopped unnecessarily in the station or tunnel and K-tower will contact them then.

---

**Kevin from Stafford asks:**

Again the service has been delightful, but here's a question for the management. Why don't you lease out areas of the platform for someone to sell coffee? Or maybe have some way of selling it aboard the train? it seems like every other car has a bathroom, how cool would it be if one of those bathrooms was gutted and turned into a bar (coffee in the morning, adult drinks in the evening) VRE could lease the space out to a vendor and not worry about the management. Thanks!

**VRE Management:**

We have had cafe cars in the past. They were not profitable, I have no intention of bringing them back.

---

**Steve from Burke, VA asks:**

Dale, Would it be possible for Fairfax County to paint "arrows or one way" messages on the ground floor of the Burke Centre garage? There are drivers who constantly drive the wrong direction (south) on the ground floor (the parking area next to the road) to "beat" the traffic out of the exit. This causes another traffic jam at the exit to the garage. The signs say the traffic flow is one-way towards the north side of the garage. Thank you!

**VRE Management:**

I will refer your suggestion to Fairfax County.

---

**Rod Price from VA asks:**

Could you play some foghat over the intercom when getting into Crystal City in the morning?  
That is one slow ride!

**VRE Management:**

Take it easy, Rod :) . Not sure if everyone would enjoy Foghat and not aware of speed restrictions in that area that would slow the ride down. Email [gotrains@vre.org](mailto:gotrains@vre.org) with your train number and we'll look into it.

---

**Ed from Crystal City asks:**

The roof of the Crystal City station had many of those plastic pieces that were glued on them, the ones to keep the snow from avalanching off in a huge chunk? Most of those have come loose and are now just debris in the gutters. Could you get someone to replace those before the winter hits?

**VRE Management:**

Winter is coming so I will have it looked into.

---

**Roy from Gainesville, VA asks:**

Do the locomotives and cab cars have deer chasers installed on them? I'm always surprised the trains do not hit more deer, especially this time of year.

**VRE Management:**

No deer chasers on the trains. Most of the engineers will blow their horns when they see animals on the tracks which works most of the time. There is the occasional deer strike.

---

**Addy Space from Commerce asks:**

Metro has these nice signs on the side of many of their buses and trains. VRE however has very large sized train cars with areas that could be used for advertising. Considering that the costs for installing the signs will be easily covered after the first set of ads, why hasn't VRE thought about putting advertisements on the side of its trains? You might be able to make some revenue and possibly lower ticket prices. Oh wait, this is VRE you would put on the ads and raise prices because of the expenses incurred.

**VRE Management:**

At this point, added revenue is something we are looking for to reduce costs. We have not found any vendors who want to wrap our trains.

---

**George from Burke, VA asks:**

Yesterday was Halloween. Why didnt VRE have an eight car consist for the 3:45 train (327) leaving Union Station?? It was very, very crowded, at least to the Rolling Road station, as many folks leave early.

**VRE Management:**

We have not changed consists for Halloween in the past. however, we will keep this in mind for the future.

---

**Ed from Lorton asks:**

I have seen train systems in many different places, including airports, other american cities, theme parks, and even in international locations. All of the ones I have seen all have one thing in common, being able to stop in the same place each time. They are even so good at it that they can put down markers on the ground at the stations for where the doors are going to open. Now given all that, why can't VRE figure out how to stop a train in the same place each time? You have been doing this for 20 years, you'd think you could have done this by now.

**VRE Management:**

Stopping a train is not as easy as stopping an automobile. We want our crews to stop the trains consistently, but we understand it is not always possible. The changing passengers loads, brake dynamics, and even crew changes will make for some variability in the stopping locations. Having said that the crews are doing much better in this area.

---

**Mike from Fredericksburg, VA asks:**

Any plans to add Wi-Fi? I prefer commuting by train but more often travel by a commuter bus because of the available Wi-Fi which allows me to get a start on the work day. Thanks

**VRE Management:**

I know we compete with other modes because of the availability of WiFi on those systems. Unfortunately, cost is a factor and I want to avoid the slow connections that Amtrak WiFi users have been experiencing. Getting wireless service along major highways is not a problem; the tracks we operate through have undeveloped areas with spotty coverage.

---

**Dave from Mfanassas, VA asks:**

there was a substantial ticket machine outage last week which impacted folks buying tickets for travel into D.C. yet machines at L'Enfant seemed to be workign just fine. What was the cause of this system-outage, and what is being done to preclude it happening again?

**VRE Management:**

We switched our routers to Verizon's upgraded circuits which caused issues last week and have since been restored. We always work closely with Verizon and other vendors to ensure smooth transitions for projects like these but sometimes there are hiccups.

---

**Russ from Fredericksburg** asks:

The bus driver who drove us to Leeland from Springfield, after the tracks were washed out, did a commendable job. But, the process could have been a lot less painful for her (and everyone else) if someone had taken a marker and a sheet of paper, wrote the bus's destination down, and put it inside the door of the bus for all the drenched mob to read. Just one idea.

**VRE Management:**

We have emergency bus boxes that we normally use for these type of disruptions. They do have signs in them, but we simply we could not manage to get one to the Franconia/Springfield station that day.

---

**Marty from Fredericksburg Va** asks:

I heard rumors about one of the parking lots in Fredericksburg going away, Wow, parking is tough enough already. have you considered leasing some portion of the Fredericksburg Parking garage? I bet you could get a better deal than we could as individuals.

**VRE Management:**

One of the 30 space lots on Sophia street would like to terminate their agreement. This is a contract issue so I can't really comment beyond that at this time.

---

**K from Manassas** asks:

Why don't all conductors follow the same guidelines for all the trains? It seems like there is no consistence on the trains as to what each conductor enforces which makes it confusing for the riders.

**VRE Management:**

Consistency is the hallmark of great service. I will continue to work with Keolis on this.

---

**Jim from Burke** asks:

There are still multiple TV monitors out at Burke and L'Enfant ... at least four at last count. It doesn't really bother me but I hate to see VRE wasting resources to maintain an unused service.

**VRE Management:**

We recently contracted a vendor to address all the issues for the PA and VMS systems at our stations and should be getting better. Please email [gotrains@vre.org](mailto:gotrains@vre.org) with exact locations so we can better direct our efforts.

---

**Cecelia from Fredericksburg VA asks:**

I have brought this to the attention of VRE management on other occasions, but I keep pressing the issue because nothing has been done. **PROBLEM:** Extended parking at Leeland Rd. station. Passengers walking from vehicles parked in the gravel lot to the train platform have to navigate the very rough and hazardous "walkway". I say "hazardous" because the large rubble and gravel thrown up on the walkway can cause one to twist or turn an ankle. Thus causing a medical liability. I have witnessed women in high heels having a very hard time on this walkway. Vehicles now park on the walkway.

**VRE Management:**

We are working towards expanding the Leeland Road lot which would eliminate the need for the gravel lot. The gravel lot is leased by Stafford County and not by VRE. The likelihood of paving this area is very small.

---

**Shake Rattle and Roll from quietsville asks:**

Could you please check the overhead racks and ensure they are on tightly. Many of them are getting loud rattles and squeaks that are very loud.

**VRE Management:**

I'll look into it.

---

from **Manassas** asks:

The 329 comes blazing in to Crystal City every day and the last car over shoots it's stop. Last Friday it was half way up the platform. Can they come in slower and try to get close to where the doors should be opening?

**VRE Management:**

I will look into this one also.

---

**Carl from Fredericksburg** asks:

What's been the issue w/ the new locomotives breaking down of late?

**VRE Management:**

We operated at 97% for October and would have been similar in September if not for the weather. Mechanical problems are at an all time low, but they will occur on the cars and the locomotives from time to time. Even the new ones.

---

**Jackson from Fredericksburg** asks:

I understand your limitations on adding new service therefore there is no express train in the afternoon. Why not make the 303 an Express Train. Folks would adjust and make due.

**VRE Management:**

I understand your reasoning. But after the concern raised by Union Station riders when I wanted to terminate trains at L'Enfant, I know I would not be able to make this work.

---

**TC from Haymarket, VA** asks:

Is the Haymarket/Gainesville extension still in the plans? If so, when?

**VRE Management:**

It is still in the plans. Hopefully 3-4 years from now.

---

**Michael from Woodbridge, VA** asks:

The temperature in the trains from Fredricksburg is still cold (68.2F on my gauge). Add to this, the fan level, always on high and extremely noisy. Amtrak trains are very old yet are still very quiet and have a very well-controlled climate system. What gives????

**VRE Management:**

We set the thermostats for 70-72 and have seen complaints about the temperature being too cold drop significantly. Please email [gotrains@vre.org](mailto:gotrains@vre.org) with the car you are riding that is too cold.

---

**Laura from Burke** asks:

Who was the genius that decided to put a speed-bump in front of a stop sign at the Burke garage? I'm guessing FFX county? I am in favor of trying to slow people who drive too fast in/near the garage, but putting a speed-bump at the stop sign seems a big redundant and poor planning...

**VRE Management:**

Fairfax County is in charge of the parking garage and both VRE and the county have received numerous complaints about people driving too fast and not stopping. This was the best recourse they had.

---

**fred from stafford, va** asks:

could you add more H/C parking at leeland station?

**VRE Management:**

We can look into this as part of the parking lot expansion at Leeland.

---

**Dave from Manassas** asks:

A couple weeks ago, we had a few folks trying to get tickets for the ealy train into D.C. They didn't have credit-cards and of course there are NO cash sales available; some kind souls donated single-ride tickets to get them going. Not everyone has a credit card; why not have a cash-accepting machine in the lobby of the station?

**VRE Management:**

Our fare collection system was designed to not accept cash to reduce theft. To design one machine that accepts cash is cost prohibitive. We will look at alternatives when we upgrade/update the system.

---

**Raquel from Stafford VA** asks:

I would like to know when VRE will consider painting the 3-way stop area at the ENTRANCE/EXIT OF THE PARKING LOT. There have been so many close calls because our inconsiderate co-commuters are not stopping to let others through. This is a problem that could end up a tragedy if left unattended. Unfortunately we live in a time when its all about "ME" and the heck with you. So please is this something you would consider putting on your list of things to do that is of importance to so many others. Thank you in advance.

**VRE Management:**

Please email [gotrains@vre.org](mailto:gotrains@vre.org) if you are referring to Brooke or Leeland and I will look into it.

---

**Matt from Lorton, VA** asks:

I've noticed every day when the train arrives in Lorton, that their is a spot at the north end of the platform that is constantly wet - it never seems to dry. Could you look into this platform problem?

**VRE Management:**

Will do.

---

**Bob from Manassas, VA** asks:

Can you tell us the current status of the proposed Broad Run parking garage?

**VRE Management:**

Currently we are doing the environmental analysis and preliminary engineering but there is no money for construction.

---

**JES from Woodbridge** asks:

In the last Q&A, you mentioned it was not "illegal" but a safety issue when standing in the vestibule. It does get crowded in the afternoons, and people end up in the vestibules. The conductors usually say, "You're not allowed in here, get in the hallways," now, when there's no room, we usually end up back in vestibule once they leave. When shown the "answer" you gave of "not illegal" a conductor said, "if the boss says it isn't, then it isn't, it's your safety, so you decide" and left. While others said "I don't care, get out." Please clarify to us and the conductors. Thanks!

**VRE Management:**

If there is room in the non-vestibule area, you should be there. Being uncomfortable in the non-vestibule area does not qualify as no room. I will work with the conductors on this.

---

**Sam from Manassas Park** asks:

Manassas Train 327 seems to have become much more crowded starting last week. It has gone from comfortably full leaving Alexandria to sardine can leaving Crystal City. Was there an equipment change that shorted that train?

**VRE Management:**

No equipment change. As you can see, ridership is continuing to grow.

---

**Kevin from Stafford, VA** asks:

Thanks for everything, service has been great as usual; I think I speak for a lot of riders when I say this. Also, when I say "I would rather have wifi available to me on the trains for a price... than to not have it at all" I think I speak for a lot of riders as well. I know this is a service you want to provide for free, but if it's not feasible why don't you charge for the product? Let's be honest, a majority of riders wouldn't have a problem with paying for this service. Maybe you should survey the riders to see what they would be willing to pay? Just a thought. Thanks!

**VRE Management:**

Our last survey to ask that questions states differently. Most who answered that question stated they would not use WiFi if it was not free.

---

**Jan from Stafford, Virginia** asks:

Thank you for providing a quiet car. Recently, however, there have been a lot of folks making a lot of noise with bags of chips and other annoying items. While that may not be specifically addressed in the quiet car rules, since the intent is to provide an environment free of noise and distractions, can you please add no eating to the rules for the quiet car?

**VRE Management:**

It is intended to be a quiet car, not a silent car. Since food is allowed on the train, I am not going to restrict it from the Quiet Car. We can certainly add this to our list of courtesy issues.

---

**David from Burke** asks:

Since the VRE parking garage is controlled by Fairfax county is there a way that they can have an officer can be there during the evening commute to slow individuals down and reduce the number that are exiting via the entrance. The current situation is an accident waiting to happen.

**VRE Management:**

They recently installed a speed bump to slow down drivers exiting. They have had police there in the past, but they cannot be there every day.

---

**Dave from Manassas** asks:

Display monitors at Manassas station have been out of order for months. If they aren't going to be repaired and serve no purpose (even when they were working NONE have time displayed...which is easily provided), why not just take them down instead of burning the electricity for them?

**VRE Management:**

Our IT department is working with a contractor to address the platform sign issues.

---

**Carol from Fredericksburg, VA** asks:

Why don't conductors ask those wearing headsets to keep the volume down so that only they can hear it. It's very annoying to hear what someone else is listening to, whether clearly or muted. This seems to be pervasive.

**VRE Management:**

If you notice someone's headset is too loud, if you don't want to politely ask yourself, your conductor can address the issue for you. Please bring it to their attention as they pass through.

---

**William** from **King George, VA** asks:

Feredericksburg Train line 309 is OVERCROWDED. Any relief in site?

**VRE Management:**

Unfortunately not. I am working on some storage issues. Once solved, I may be able to lengthen some trains, but not for awhile.

---

**Jeff** from **Brandy Station** asks:

What is the planned service for the week between Xmas and New Years? S Schedule or regular service?

**VRE Management:**

"S" Schedule December 23 and 30. No Service December 26 and January 2. Regular service all other days.

---

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

Dale, What's the timeframe on modifying the old ADA lift cage at Manassas Park so we can stand out of the weather?

**VRE Management:**

We are working on the one at Franconia/springfield as part of the rehabilitation of that station. Depending on how that goes, we will evaluate the situation at the rest of the stations.

---

**Robyne** from **Fredericksburg, VA** asks:

Good afternoon, I would like to know why the temperature on the VRE leaving F'Burg at 6:05 am is always so very cold, to the point that many folks are bringing blankets, and this is during the summer months. It's not right considering the amount of money it costs to ride the VRE. However, I do feel that the staff that works on the VRE are outstanding, courteous and helpful! I thank you for your time.

**VRE Management:**

The air handlers move air through the train constantly to prevent stagnation, which makes the air feel colder. Sitting on the bottom reduces the wind chill factor.

---

**K** from **Manassas** asks:

I would have a problem having to pay for wi-fi. I can barely afford to ride VRE as it is.

**VRE Management:**

Kevin, here is one example from one of our other riders who cant pay for WiFi.

---

**VRE Management:**

Another great forum! Thanks for meeting with me on this special Tuesday edition. Our next on-line forum will be December 7th which is also the date of our annual on board Toys for Tots collection. See you then!

-Dale