I do not concur with the proposed rate increases. The current monthly pass is already higher than the federal government transportation subsidy of $255 and riders have to personally pay the remaining difference. The VRE is consistent but the frequency of trains is limited and there is no weekend trains. I do not agree with the proposed rate increase.

I noticed that there is not a 2pm train leaving Lefant. I also noticed there is an Amtrak that leaves Union Station in the 2’clock hour but does not stop at Lefant. Will the Amtrak 95 ever stop at Lefant? This would make sense. There are many many people who have kids in school and Amtrak 95 would be the perfect train to get down to the Alexandria, Lorton, Woodbridge, and Fredericksburg areas in time to pick up kids from school. There are also many more people who work 6-2 shift and would love the option of going home on the Amtrak 95 instead of waiting around for the next VRE. This would save commuters with kids money as they will no longer have after school care for their kids and would save the 6-2 workers time by shaving off 40+ minutes from their day. I believe this would increase sales greatly and improve the quality of life for the riders. Please consider.

I don’t have any issue with an increased fare. Can you install Wi-Fi on the trains, since it’s possible at 30,000 feet? At least folks will feel like they’re getting something extra and I’d imagine the cost to be nominal to install and maintain.

I would like to submit my comment about VRE’s proposed fare increase. I do not see any logic on the proposed 3% fare increase to pay for increased operations costs and the Amtrak Step-up tickets from $5.00 to $7.00. Here is why. The 10-Year Gas Price Trend Chart from GasBuddy Website shows gas prices have been hovering between $2.84 and $1.59 from 10/2015 to 3/2017 and yet VRE has kept its fare at a steady state during this period. Currently, gas price is above $2.09. Based on this trend, I would think VRE has enough surpluses to support its proposed 3% fare increase and the Amtrak Step-up tickets.

The recently proposed fare increase for the VRE poses a momentous threat to our local commuters. Commuters have already been subjected to a 4% fare hike in 2015 and 2013, as well as another 3% increase in 2012. Imposing an additional 3% fare hike this year will only increase the financial burden on the hundreds of local commuters who rely on the VRE as an affordable means of transportation.

As the traffic issue persists in Prince William and Stafford counties, it is critical that we work to incentivize commuters to use alternative forms of transportation, rather than penalizing them for doing so. Typically, VRE provides an attractive alternative to standstill roadways, but the latest fare hike is detrimental to Virginia families. My fear is that as the price increases, the ridership will decrease and in the end creating an even greater budgetary shortfall.
I strongly oppose the proposed 3% fare increase. I hope in the future we can work together to meet the financial obligations, while keeping the financial cost for riders low.

Your fare increase proposal on Amtrak Step-Up tickets is simply unacceptable. An increase in Amtrak Step-up to $7 represents a 40% increase overnight and a 133% increase from the $3 fare offered in early 2015. That's effectively an increase of 44% per year over 3 years. I cannot imagine that the costs of association with Amtrak are increasing at a rate of 40% plus per year.

While I understand prices must increase overtime, these price hikes are astronomical relative to inflation and price increases of other forms of commuting to Washington.

As a person who specializes in assisting travel companies maximize their revenue, I can tell you that even minor fare increases can reduce the demand realized by your service. 40% + fare increases will be noticed by consumers, and your traffic will drop. Perhaps enough that the additional revenue you think you will raise will disappear when people switch to other commuting options. I recommend you dramatically alter this proposal to an increase of no more than 5% to $5.25.

While I understand the need for maintaining the system, the issue I have is the lack of seating on the 327 and 329 trains (I am writing this while seated on the very comfortable stairs leading to the upper deck on the 327)! This has been an ongoing issue for months now. I am all for the fee increase but understand we are not paying 2 or 3 dollars to ride like metro. When we pay this much I would expect seating. Please address this as you did for the Fredericksburg line. My behind is getting sore!

I am writing in response to the proposed fare increase put forward by the Virginia Railway Express. I would like to go on record as being deeply apposed to these increases. It's not that I am flatly against spending more money. If the money was being spent in a way that was of greater benefit, I would be fine with it. But given the VRE's history of fare increases (at least one every 2 years) and the lack of system improvement behind it, I have no choice but to be against this fare increase.

The last time the VRE raised rates was in July, 2015. This 4% fare increase was in order to generate an addition $900,000 in fares for 2016. The reason why the VRE needed these additional funds was never released. However, around the same time it was announced (December 2014) that the VRE would honor board member who "were early or long-tenured members, or whose extraordinary efforts contributed to its success, will be honored by having their names placed on the front of VRE locomotives." (http://www.insidenova.com/headlines/vre-names-locomotives-to-honor-board-members/article_78d7d448-8a68-11e4-ab49-d3fe081b9758.html)

So, in other words, the VRE was spending money it didn't have (or else it would not need to raise its fares) on superficial name plates for the front of engines that serve absolutely NO practice purpose and have 0 benefit to the rider.
In the time since, the VRE’s performance hasn’t exactly been stellar. It’s average on-time performance has been 89.3%, with it’s lowest performance coming in July 2015 on the Fredericksburg line coming in at a horrendous 63%.

During this time, customer service on the VRE has also failed to improve. To the VRE’s credit, they do hold monthly online forums, however, concerns brought up by riders on these forums are rarely, if ever, addressed. I know myself and other have routinely brought up the issue of personal safety while at the broad run parking lot. Every time it is brought up, the VRE simply says that they “work with PWCPD to address the issue,” yet people still race through stop signs, ignore pedestrians, pass people in the parking lot (I even emailed the VRE to this effect after being passed in the parking lot myself, and the safety coordinator had stated that the very same thing had happened to him in the past, yet nothing has changed). A few months ago, a rider was even struck in the parking lot. Yet the VRE continues to do nothing about this issue other than saying “we’re working with PWCPD on the issue.”

Another example of the customer service that the VRE provides us riders can be seen recently with the Fredericksburg line. The Fredericksburg line has been experiencing a rash of issues with it’s on time performance. Trains have needed coupling, riders have been late on numerous times (36 trains have experienced delays since the beginning of march on the Fredericksburg line, 4 of which were delays that were over 100 minutes). One of these delays was on March 20th, during which the VRE used it’s alert system to INSULT it’s riders who were complaining that they were stuck on the train for yet another mechanical issue. "Contrary to the musings of those on social media..." the post read, as it went on to explain that the cause of yet another delay was unrelated to the previous 35. That post was located at http://content.govdelivery.com/bulletins/gd/VAVRE-18ea6c9, I say was as it appears to have been taken down. Before it was taken down, a few riders were able to comment on the post on Facebook:

The "musings" you mention in your email is insulting. With consistent mechanical issues in 312 and 314, does it really matter it was coolant loss this time? You all need to take these engines out of service.

Like · Reply · 5 · March 20 at 1:37pm

Honestly! I couldn’t believe that.

Like · Reply · 1 · March 20 at 1:46pm

Sara Holt This. Literally no one cares if this problem was different than the last problem. However, I do care that I’m shelling out $5 to ride Amtrak + $8 daily parking in Fredericksburg multiple times in the last month on top of the $320 I’m paying to VRE just trying to avoid this garbage.

Dealing with delays is bad enough, especially for the riders who buy mostly tickets, for which the free-ride tickets are useless, an nothing more than a slap in the face. But further going on to INSULT your riders is frankly unacceptable. After all of this, can the VRE really say that it deserves to be able to raise our fares? Perhaps improve your service first.

To Delegate Marshall and State Senator Black, I sincerely hope that you will take this email and understand the frustration myself and my fellow riders have with this publicly funded transit system and hold them accountable for their service, and to make sure the insulting manor in which they deal with their riders is not tolerated. To the VRE, I hope from now on, you will hold yourselves to a higher standard, one that would be worth the extra money you want to charge.
What additional does the customer get?

- Consider customer service

- The last few months have been less than stellar months for VRE. Constant late, broke, delayed trains
  - We used to get free tickets but those are becoming more burdensome for the customer to acquire. One has to almost beg for the free ticket. I asked about this and got three different answers from three different conductors. It became the joke for the riders!
  - Once a standard is set, if it changes, make your riders aware so they can manage their expectations accordingly.
  - The app that was initially well received was not compatible with Androids; therefore when an update was pushed, customers could not access their tickets and some were told they had to re-purchase tickets.
- Little to no information was provided to customers
- No fix has been made to the system that I am aware of
- Consider your riders
  - Due to Safe-Track, numerous metro riders started riding the trains in the evenings
    - No additional cars were added
    - Customers had to stand until the train was far enough south to allow them to find seats
    - Some conductors were rather rude in the way they handled those riders who were standing as they blocked the aisles
- Consider your reputation
  - I started riding the train because VRE had reputation for excellence, timeliness and cleanliness
    - Excellence and timeliness have been lacking, but thankfully cleanliness has remained a high standard
- Bottomline: The customer gets no more than they’ve been getting...a ride to their place of employment. In these times of budget restrictions, budget cuts, and possible cutting of Transit Subsidy altogether, a rate increase at this time would severely impact some riders
- Publish something that outlines, in detail, what the customer will receive and give that to your ridership before increasing fares.

I would like to see Family Pricing that would include you already high increase for Families that would like to VRE in on the weekends to DC. A Friday night pass with return trip on Sunday night so I can enjoy all that DC offers on the weekend. I live in Woodbridge and I know there are thousands of people who would use this even Stafford and far as Fredricksburgh. I currently live in Woodbridge.

I am a Manassas VRE rider and I commute round trip to L’Enfant Plaza. The fare is already $19.00 per day. The train provides a clean and safe environment, and it would be unacceptable to lose that.
However, if the fare has to be increased by more than a $1.00 then I would ask that wireless internet and charging outlets be provided on the train. The Amtrak train provides these amenities and this is a train that has had far more derailments/issues then the VRE.

If there is no incentive for passengers to pay more when there is a Metro option, then you may lose passengers.

VRE would again like to increase ticket prices. The only question to be answered as far as the customer (me) is concerned is, “What do I get out of this?”

Ride any train out of Crystal City in the afternoon and we constantly hear apologies for the crowding. I generally see Manassas trains as standing room only when they get to Crystal City; Fredericksburg line trains are only slightly better. Seats are full. Ticket enforcement is constant, so little revenue is lost from cheats. Reliability hasn’t seemed to improved and individual incidents make it seem that some trains are plagued (312). Of the first 13 service days in March, only 3 saw 100% performance for both lines.

So, what is in this for me? The vague “increased reliability” isn’t sufficient, what specific things does VRE propose to do to make me feel better about spending my money on their service? What action plan has been created and approved by management? What are the exact costs?

My only comment is that it seems to me that every time you have an open comment period for a proposed fare increase, you have a spike in delays and problems. Next time, just raise the fares. You are going to do that anyway, so you might as well save us all the delays. :-(

Seriously, why have these meetings? Nothing will come from them other than a lot of people complaining only to have the rates go up anyway. A complete waste of time.

A three percent fare increase is being proposed in order to pay for increased operations costs – what operation costs increased? Fuel costs are down, you don’t have any new cars, you have increased ridership which generates more funds. I don’t understand what increased operations costs includes.

And the Amtrak Step-up tickets would increase from $5 to $7.- Each customer pays for their own step-up tickets, so why would this increase affect VRE costs?

3% is far too excessive. You just had an increase last year. You cannot price your service out of the market. Already a trip downtown for the day for a rider (tourist) is $19 – that is way too much.

I have been on the train with mechanical issues for the last 30 days. The person who sends the recap of the delays always presents a “back handed” apology that is laden with excuses.

I do not support a rate increase. VRE continually has issues getting passenger to their destinations on time which is costly to the riders.

I am a new rider. I will not recommend the VRE to anyone and am seeking another form of transportation.
Regarding the proposed fare hike (effective July 2017). I just want to confirm – I purchased several 10 trip tickets in December 2016 that have a published expiration date of December 2017. Will VRE honor the fare on the previously purchased tickets (and their corresponding expiration date) or would I be required to obtain new tickets?

I am not able to make it to any of the public hearings, but I think there should not be a fair increase. The mechanical issues that the VRE has been having with train 312 and the issues with coupling to this train have been horrendous. The delays have been a huge inconvenience to passengers. I usually take the 314 in the morning out of Fredericksburg so I have been delayed every time 312 has broken down.

When we got stuck in Woodbridge I had to call a co-worker to come get me because I could not take a bus back to Fredericksburg and then turn around and come back north to work. I am not a government employee and I do not have any type of subsidizing and I cannot telecommute or miss the day of work. The past months have been very frustrating to say the least.

As inflation increases and raises are limited, I would like to request that rate increases do not go into effect to keep the VRE an affordable option to get into DC.

There were three things that I wanted to comment on at the Manassas meeting but I missed it.

1> $5 is the acceptable amount that your customers will pay for the Amtrak move up tickets to Manassas. We would only pay more if there was an Amtrak move up available after the last VRE evening train going to Manassas. I know Amtrak does not have a scheduled train after the VRE schedule every evening through the week. When move ups went to $10, we all stopped.

2> Since the schedule change, our morning train (326) is constantly being slowed down by the (302) from Fredericksburg by Alexandria. Since all trains are running on the same tracks and making the same stops from Alexandria to Union Station, shouldn’t the first train to Alexandria get the rails first? Would it take more than a radio call to the dispatcher? Why should we be constantly delayed following the 302?

3> There are a lot of us that are required to come into work when the federal government is closed. We are either emergency government workers or nongovernment workers that have to come in anyway. Instead of putting us out on the dangerous, slick roads for 36 miles, would it not be better to put us on a (S) scheduled train into the District? I have asked before to put this question on the annual survey for 4 years and I have yet to see it for VRE planning purposes.

I am absolutely against a fare increase if it does not include fixing the current trains that are plagued with mechanical issues. I have been extremely late to my job on four occasions in the last few weeks and it is unacceptable to both me and my employer.

I have been noting a number of Mechanical Issues/problems that I have received in my Train Talk Alerts/Notices. There were a number of mechanical issues requiring coupling or major delays. What is the VRE vendor and VRE doing to insure their fleet of cars and trains are maintained and in working order?
Not a good time to discuss fare increases with the trends of delay on the 310...

I have been stuck on the same train several times within the last 30 days. We are stuck again this morning. I do not support a rate increase when VRE continually does not get me to my destination as scheduled. I will not recommend the VRE to anyone and will start looking for another form of transportation.

Disappointed rider!

Recommend No FY2018 VRE Fare increase for the following reasons:

1. Ridership projections in FY2018 budget are low - 18,200. January 2017 ridership was 19,700 without Safetrack work. Recommend using a ridership projection of 19,000 for FY2018, which should almost eliminate the fare increase need.

2. Increasing fares reduces VRE ridership

3. Significant competition will be coming from a faster, cheaper, and more reliable bus service on I-95/I-395 and I-66 Express lanes starting in 2021/2022.

4. According to the VRE CEO Report, as of January 2017, the VRE Operating Ratio is at 58% (50% required) with $4,521,906 surplus in FY2017 with 5 months to go! Surplus could be added to an “operating shortfall fund” for future use instead of one time capital improvements.

5. WMATA is planning to reduce train frequencies and raise fares starting in FY2018

6. No new VRE service is being added

7. Major Construction is planned to start on I-66 Outside the Beltway and I-395 Express Lanes in 2017/2018

8. Express Lane transit payments are coming to the I-66 and I-95 corridors staring in 2022/2019. ($1.5B over 45 years on I-66 Outside the Beltway)

I object to the new fare increase because VRE is not availing itself of all ready means of revenue and is not using all its revenue well.

Many of us who routinely buy monthly tickets to zone 2 or 3 occasionally go into Washington. Years ago, VRE said it would offer step-up tickets to us so we could extend a trip without buying a ticket that costs $1.50 a mile to go from zone 2 to zone 1. VRE has not done this and still has empty seats between Crystal City and Washington. Dale Zehner told me I am supposed to buy a ticket from zone 2 to zone 1 (which I can’t validate when purchasing it, even though the machine says it can), get off the train at Crystal City, validate the ticket there, and get back on. If I have to go to Washington, I do get off the train at Crystal City, and I stay off and ride Metro. As bad as it is, Metro doesn’t cost $1.50 per mile or (ordinarily) require me to get on and off the same train.

VRE also is doing a poor job with the money it spends on communications. I asked a friend in Portland, Oregon, whether the transit agency there tells people what kind of shoes to wear. He said, no, that would be treating passengers like idiots. Robert Benchley wrote, "Any one can do any amount of work, provided it isn't the work he is supposed to be doing at that moment." After
spending money on signs about 8 feet long telling us what kind of shoes to wear, VRE continues to
give its passengers wrong train announcements and wrong track announcements. It tells us on
March 1 that the end of the month is approaching, and it advises us to transfer to Metro at Quantico.
VRE needs to avail itself of reasonable sources of revenue and use that revenue sensibly before
raising fares again.

I am a fairly new rider to VRE after switching from Metrorail to VRE about 8 months ago. I am not a
Federal Government employee and as such, I am not provided a ticket by my employer. After I
began riding and upon learning about my pleasant experience on VRE, 3 other employees from my
office have stopped
driving to work and have started using VRE. Even though our travel costs are higher on VRE, we
are generally happy with our commute aboard VRE.

I understand your fare increase request and have no objection.

However, when VRE does not operate on Federal Holidays or when there is a Government closure,
this leaves those of us in the private sector stranded.

VRE needs to service the needs of all workers, not just the Government employees. I could accept a
schedule with less trains on the days the Government
does not operate. I am already paying more for VRE. When you reduce the service days, it makes it
difficult for the very passengers you are attempting to retain and pushes us back into our cars or
Metrorail. This issue won’t matter to Government employees- their transportation is paid for by
their employers. But to those of us who pay their own transportation costs, this effectively costs us
more as we must either drive or use Metrorail when VRE chooses to not operate.

I am a new rider with a subsidy payment from the government & new resident of Fredericksburg. I
feel that the rate should not be increased at this time. The service has caused me to be late to work
or home at least 5 or more times on a new job. I have received the free ride tokens for 3 of them.
Not to mention unable to get to work consistently at near the same time that results in alternate
work schedule requests. I would then be subjected to also more out of pocket expenses in an
already shocking cost of living area. Thanks for your consideration.

I’ll do my best to keep it simple and to the point; a 100% + far increase for the Amtrak Step Up
Ticket in a period of two years is beyond defensible. Asking the consumers of these tickets to
absorb such cost is outrageous. Many of us NEED that Amtrak ticket because while our hours
fluctuate, the VRE’s run schedules do not and there aren’t enough trains in earlier time slots to get
us home.

I get off early every other Friday and sometimes in the middle of the day. There’s a 1:45 VRE stop at
Woodbridge and nothing else until 3:04 - the Amtrak ride (assuming it shows up within the hour).
The next VRE shows up at 3:59.

The squeeze -

Most of us MUST live a long way from work just to be able to afford to live a half-way decent
lifestyle. I-95 is hopeless. That leaves us depending on the train. Either way, commute hours take
their toll over time so when we have an opportunity to go home earlier, it is hard to digest the fact
we are being taken advantage of with skyrocketing costs. I don't have to tell you (do I) that costs are far outpacing any raises we may receive. It's been so long since most of us have had a raise, we forgot how to spell it. What we do get regularly, is the tallyman's whip demanding we give more and more....

Point of diminishing returns -

The customer at some point decides they cannot justify the cost of the ticket so it goes unsold. How does this improve a company's bottom line? How does this encourage ridership? The customer must take it in the shorts or face longer waits in commute.

This vicious cycle must come to an end. If things continue this way unchecked, it WILL come to an end all on its own. Accordingly, the VRE, Amtrak, its subsidiaries and suppliers, must find alternative means and methods to operate effectively and efficiently without bleeding the consumer dry. If you do not, the entire system will collapse in domino effect. I offer Metro Rail as proof. While the circumstances may differ in some ways, results are the same.

Lastly, when the Step Up Ticket first increased a couple of years back, my use of Amtrak diminished significantly. If it goes to $7 per ride, it will diminish significantly yet again. This does not serve either of us in my view.

I think since the ridership goes up each year which allows more funding to flow into VRE, then there is no need to raise the fares this year. Gas prices have remained steady and more riders are riding the train bring in more revenue and costs for VRE should be okay this year without a fare increase.

Just think at this time a one trip (roundtrip) into the city costs over $19. That is a very steep fare for going into DC as it is, anymore than that and VRE will price themselves out of the market. Keep that in mind. You need to keep the fare efficient and economically fair for riders or they will not take the train anymore.

Public commenting is a joke. You know you are going to raise fares. Just do it and save everyone the time and effort.

My husband and I ride VRE on a regular basis and find the service reliable and efficient. We fully support the proposed fare increase as reasonable and prudent. Expenses increase and we should all expect that VRE needs to keep pace with costs. We both support VRE because it helps keep cars off the road. The cost of riding VRE is much cheaper than driving and parking in D.C. Keep up the good work!

The step-up ticket fares should not be increased. I understand a full-fare ticket from Manassas to Union Station purchased directly from Amtrak is $14. The other stations on the Manassas line certainly cost no more than that, and likely cost less. A VRE ticket is approximately $9 each way. Therefore $5 represents the additional cost for riding Amtrak. It does not make sense to charge any more than that.

Moreover, I sometimes ride the Amtrak in lieu of VRE from Manassas to DC. $5 is about the most I would be willing to pay. $3 was better. At an additional cost of $7, it no longer is a commuting
option I would be interested in and I believe others would feel the same way. I think the price increase would serve as a deterrent from using the Amtrak.

Finally, regarding the overall price increase, there *should* be a compelling reason for this. But I'm not sure that there actually is. Gas prices are down. Have VRE operations costs increased that much to offset and even outweigh the decrease in the price of gas? There is no talk of additional train times so what is the money needed for?

I'm writing to express my frustration and disappointment in VRE's "proposed" fare increase and the process surrounding it's roll-out. I realize your costs are increasing and that fare increases are an easy target to make up the difference but I hope you understand that it has a large impact to your riders. Fare increases should be the last resort - not the first or the second. Before a fare increase is adopted, I hope VRE has reviewed and re-reviewed your expenditures to make sure there isn't something that you could be doing (or not doing) to save money. Even if that means only have to raise fares by 2.5% rather than 3% it would be worth it.

My second point goes to process. I appreciate that you have public meetings to explain your position and take public comments but those are almost impossible for me to attend (and I suspect a lot of others too). That doesn't mean I'm not interested or concerned about the fare increase and I hope you don't take it as such. In this day and age, I cannot understand why you don't post something more substantial on your website. Right now I only see the new proposed fares and the schedule of public meetings. Cannot VRE management write a letter to us riders explaining the need for a fare increase and post it to the web site? I really don't thing that's too much to ask. Please be transparent if you do decide to write - don't give us the company line. Inform your ridership about the tough choices you have to make (if that is the case) and that you've searched everywhere for cost-cutting ideas and couldn't find any (if that is the case). Public meeting times and dates is not enough! Here's one last idea - have a virtual town hall or a Facebook live session explaining what's happening. Or here's another - devote one of those glossy (no doubt expensive) VRE publications to the fare increase instead of feel good stories. (By the way, does this cost you money to produce? If it does, please get rid of it before you increase my fares to pay for it. Publish it online if need be.)

I realize that you're going to increase the fares - i just ask that you do so only when absolutely necessary and then only after you've provided your writers with a transparent and easy way to access explanation.

I would like to request that VRE consider the total cost of commuting when looking at a fare increase. VRE is just one step in my commute. I drive to the VRE station, so I must have a car, insurance and gas. I ride the VRE train and purchase a monthly fare card. Then I take Metro across town, so I must purchase a Metro fare card. Then I get to walk 2.5 blocks to the office. I pay approximately $380 per month for VRE and Metro fare cards and gas.

Parking in my building is $247 per month. I estimate gas at $100 per month. My commute takes approximately 1:40 minutes each way. I can drive to work in the mornings in less than 1 hour. Getting home takes less than 1:30 minutes. So time to commute via train is higher than by car. If the total cost fare increases, the weight of time gained versus money paid in the commute will swing to favor the driving side versus the train side of the scales. Putting one more commuter on the roads.

Another item I hear on the train is, commuters like me, who work in the private sector, do not receive the same commuting perks as those in the public sector. We do not receive fare cards or
Metro cards as a part of our jobs. Also, since VRE closes on all Federal holidays, we still have to drive on those Federal holidays not given in the private sector.

Every year your customer cost go up and your service declines. I really do not care who may be at fault when I have 2 hour delays constantly. Service on the Fredericksburg line is horrible.

I see no need to raise the cost of a step-up ticket to Amtrak. I’ve never had to stand when riding the Amtrak. There are always empty seats and there is no additional cost to Amtrak other than the conductor asking an individual where the passenger will detrain and posting their step-up ticket above their seat on the luggage rail. On what basis do these actions initiate an increase in the cost of a ticket. Step-up passengers are already paying a hefty cost to ride the VRE and Amtrak is the only choice of transportation when the VRE is late and an individuals cannot be late for their jobs.

It is my understanding that Amtrak is not in the best of financial health. Why risk losing several $5.00 payers if they cannot afford a $7.00 step-up ticket. I didn’t see any difference in Amtrak service at $5.00 then I did at $1.00, $3.00 and $10.00. Raising the step-up is just a whim with no basis. Keep the rate at $3.00 and let Amtrak receive the extra business that they will lose when the rate is increased.

As the VRE fare has remained stable for nearly 2 years now (I began riding on the Manassas Line from Broad Run in August 2015), I have no objection in principle to a modest fare increase to account for changed prices in fuel, equipment, employee salaries, etc., and the 3% proposed increase seems reasonable; it would raise a Zone 6 (Broad Run) – Zone 2 (Crystal City) monthly pass from $241.70 to $248.95, or $7.25 per month, which doesn’t seem excessive. Being disabled, I purchase Reduced Fare monthly passes, for which I currently pay $120.85 per month via Federal government employee transit subsidy benefit; this would, if my calculations are correct, go up to $124.48 per month, or $3.63, which, again, doesn’t appear excessive.

My main concern is whether I could change my federal transit subsidy benefit to account for the new fares, but this is more properly a question for my employing agency than for VRE.

I understand a reasonable increase from time to time. However, the Amtrak step up increased recently from $3 to $5, and now VRE proposes to increase from $5 to $7. The last amtrak step up percentage increase was a 40% increase, and your current proposed increase is a 29% increase, you are increasing step ups at a much faster rate than regular fare. This is out of sync with the VRE increase of 3%.

Given that the step ups recently increased 40% in price, I recommend a VRE step up hold the same price or increase at the same rate (3%) as the rest of the fare increases. The service is critical for those of us who must have internet access to and from work. It also provides faster service and better departure times, including the latest possible departure time from DC. Until VRE can offer internet and a later departure time from Union Station, I recommend rate increases for step ups that are no more than the rate increases for the regular fare.

Do I want fares to increase? No. Do I want service to be maintained? Yes. Do I want service to be expanded? Yes. Bottom Line: Fares will need to increase to cover costs. Sucks...but that is life. And a 3% increase is not that bad.
Keep up the good work on the VRE.

Please do not increase fares.

I read with disappointment your recent announcements about public hearings and forums to comment on yet another VRE fare hike. As I have done for several years, and as a 13-year VRE veteran (riding Lorton to L’Enfant and back just about every day of the week), I have already attended at least one of the forums (last week in Burke). I was the only rider in attendance, outnumbered by VRE staff 5-to-1.

I nonetheless asked several questions, and I received several courteous albeit canned answers…but one question could not be answered, and I was told to put it to VRE management…so here goes:

What exactly does it take for me or any other VRE customer to say in order for VRE to reduce or eliminate a proposed fare hike? For years I have offered considerations like the shortfalls in the federal mass transit benefit program that seem to be taken advantage of or that are taken for granted, the willingness of riders to sacrifice a little on-time performance for reduced fare increases, the outpacing of fare hikes over federal employee benefit and cost-of-living adjustments, etc., etc. And nothing has ever changed…every fare hike has just plowed right through. So why bother soliciting for public comments if nothing is done in response to them?

I'd appreciate your insight in reply.

I understand that VRE needs to make improvements and plan for the future. However I’m against a fare increase at this time and I will tell you why.

I'm a federal worker, as are many VRE riders. We haven't gotten a decent cost of living increase in YEARS. And with this Congress and horrible president we are looking at even more cutbacks to benefits and increases in paying for for insurance. The cost of living keeps going up and are being nickel and dimed to death.

A VRE fare increase is just one more attack on federal employees and people who work for the government.

As an alternative why don’t you and MARC train people and the people who run the commuter buses go to Congress and ask for more money. AND when they say "no" just shut down all commuting lines for about 6 weeks and throw the whole area into total chaos when everyone tries to drive to work.

You need to do it right in the middle of the budget fight in Congress.

It will show the idiots in Congress the importance of public transportation and you will get the money you need.

It seems that a couple of months prior to the every-two-years-fare-increase, a series of these meetings are held to take public comment. Public comment is usually VERY anti-increase, yet the increase always take place.

So, that leads me to some conclusions:

1. The public meetings discussing the issue are only a contractual requirement.
2. Overwhelming negative public comments regarding fare-increases have no impact on the "decision" to implement the increase.

3. Regular fee increases to the operating contractor is part of the contract, so prices MUST rise.

Please comment on these observations.

As a frequent user of the Amtrak Step Ticket, I place a high value on the Amtrak option as part of the VRE service. I am concerned that the fare increase to $7 for the Amtrak step up ticket could impact riders who use this option. I would ask what justifies the $2 increase?

I please keep the step up fare at $5.00.

I would like to express my opinion for the fare increase, I don’t have a problem with the fare increase, I understand the rising cost of operations. I am not real happy that there are not enough seats on the Manassas line train that leaves union station @ 3:45 and 4:25. I pay a fee to ride the train and I have to wait until Burke stop to get a seat. This is ridiculous, I don’t understand why those (2) trains cannot increase by 1 or 2 cars. That is the (2) trains that most riders take. So, if your going to raise the fares why not increase the train cars.

There’s forever a delay of one sort or another getting to work! This morning there was a train behind us. There’s always a train behind us. There’s always a problem. And the train is always late. And to think we’re paying over $8.00 for a one-way trip from Lorton to Union Station is highway robbery! With the amount of people traveling to and from the city (ridership has increased, afterall) and getting charged exorbitant rates, it looks like somebody's getting rich to me!

My name is David Alderton, and I have been riding the VRE since October 2013. For the most part, you offer a decent service, which fortunately for government employees like myself, the costs are covered by my employer.

Having that said, in the last 15 months or so, I’ve noticed a serious increase in delays, and most recently, mechanical issues, causing canceled or lengthy delays on my commute. Normally, I take the 302 in the morning from Rippon to Union Station, and the 311 in the afternoon, Tuesday - Friday.

For whatever the reason is, ever since the Spotsylvania opened in November 2015, you can’t get to my station for it’s scheduled departure at 5:49 AM, on time. The closest I’ve ever seen the train come to that time, is 5:51 AM, and that was only on a handful of occasions. Most of the time, your 302 is departing 6 or more minutes late. Now, two days ago, on March 6th, you adjusted the schedule to bring that late departure time down 3 minutes, to 5:52 AM, but it’s still late. One thing I can’t understand is, why you only adjusted the schedule 3 minutes, when you are on average, 6 minutes late. When I questioned the conductors about this, they tell me that whether the train is late or not, only depends on the estimated final stop on the run, which makes no sense at all, since most people don’t wait until the last stop to get off the train. Late is late. If you are 1 minute late, then you are late, as I will be for work as well.

Now that I have my complaint about the service out of the way, please allow me to address the price increase you are seeking. What you have stated online, is that "a three percent fare increase is being proposed in order to pay for increased operational costs." So that tells me that you are seeking a three percent increase, to continue the same service, without any increase in service
quality or reliability listed. Now, I am totally aware, that CSX owns the lines, and sometimes there are signal problems, acts of nature, downed freight trains, etc., that you folks have no control over. I get that just fine, but what I don’t understand is how long your company has been in business, and it doesn’t seem like you have a plan to decrease these occurrences, and become even more reliable. I understand the complexity of adding in your own lines, but even the MARC has implemented things like adding line switches to the run, so if there are things like downed freight trains, it’s easier to get around them and continue service.

Since I see no information as to what your plans are to increase reliability and improve service, I cannot support such an increase. There are ways to save on operational costs, that should be implemented prior to simply requesting an increase in fares. You just received an increase of roughly 3.8%, in July of 2015, and I believe it is too soon to be asking for another increase from your customers.

Finally, please either install a single bathroom at the Rippon station, either at the entrance of the overpass, or at the bottom, where the platform is. When there are service delays, or simply people who may have medical issues, it would be extremely helpful to have something to use. At a minimum, please keep 1 or 2 port-a-johns available.

I hope you take my comments to heart, and feel free to reply with any feedback you may have. Also, thank you so much for renovating the elevator at Rippon. I only rode it once, and it made such terrible noises, I wasn’t sure if it was going to break down with me in it, so I never rode it again.

I have been riding VRE for over 8 years. In the first two or so years, delays were something that I expected during cold weather, but over time those delays dissipated and I have come to find it very reliable. Probably the most reliable public transportation system the DMV has to offer. However, where there is a delay, it is usually not a small delay by any means. Specifically in the past two weeks (if memory serves) there have been three incidents where a train on the Fredericksburg line has had a mechanical malfunction causing it to either be delayed and coupled up with another train or cancelled. When these delays happen and the passengers are offered FRC’s as compensation for the inconvenience it does not help the monthly pass holders out in any way. We have already paid the full price for the month, and we will do the same for the following month. What I would like to see implemented in the future is that these FRC’s also have a discount value/code that can be redeemed at the time of purchase. It could be a set dollar value or a percentage of the ticket cost. When the ticket is purchased, before payment is applied a screen could ask for any redeemable discounts. The FRC would then be put into the validation slot, and the discount applied therefore making the FRC Void. Otherwise the FRC offered for the inconvenience of a delay is just a throw away for most of us.

I understand the need for fare increases as the costs of maintenance increases and VRE looks to expand its fleet and service area. I will gladly pay this increase, but the need to help your monthly passengers (who probably make up a majority of your ridership) I felt is something that needs to be addressed.

Trains consistently breaking down on the F’burg line.............. and VRE is holding public hearings on fares that WILL go up – though saying proposed is a softer word for ‘heads up – it’s coming in July’. Service decreases – fares increase.

Bottom line, the engines VRE purchased can’t carry the load. Wouldn’t it be best to decrease the amount of cars engines are pulling to increase the possibility of reducing engine issues and getting
us into DC on time? Will the train be full, yes, but you would then be providing the service we all are paying for. I can’t schedule meetings in the early-mid morning as breakdowns have become more frequent (I ride different trains each day depending on the goings on in the office).

I’m at the point that I’ve started researching bus lines / van pools out of F’burg after 9 years on the VRE.

I do not get an employer subsidy so I will feel the impact.

My thoughts: what do I get in return - will I get a seat when I get on in the afternoon in Crystal City? Will the train (#324) operate at speed between Alexandria and Crystal City and not crawl everyday following the F-burg line? I should get more for my money, not the same (poor) service for more money.

It is befitting that the public hearings reminder for fare increases on the VRE website is nested among a dozen notifications of delays, couplings, decouplings, and breakdowns that have turned my (and hundreds of others) commute this morning into a day-long affair.

My commute from Rippon started at 7:30 this morning (312 Train) and it is now 11:47 and we have just departed Lorton. Best case is that I get to work at about 12:45. (We are stopped again so crews could depart the train.) To clarify, this train has moved less than four miles in over four hours. Or approximately the speed with which my 3-year-old pedals her trike.

I’ve been subject to three of these affairs in 2017 and Consistent with each is that there seems to be no standard practice for addressing a train breakdown. We lie in wait for an update, but there’s no clear backup plan other than to give nondescript, toothless updates and a flimsy timetable which no passengers actually believe.

Realistic, or at least conservative, real-time updates should be given to passengers. Every timetable update provided today was "20 minute delay," "45 minute delay." Those piecemeal delays keep passengers hanging on, in hope and in expectation that the delay is minimal. It would be far better to be transparent, "Train 312 has broken down and the delay will be no less than 30 minutes, but could potentially be as long as six hours. Passengers are encouraged to seek alternate transportation." While such an update is certain to elicit some anger and groans, it is far better than having hundreds of people’s workdays cut in half. Sure, VRE provides updates like "train is moving southward to cross tracks" or "allowing Amtrak to pass." But, all I, and anyone else want to know is, "when will you get me to DC?"

Lastly, there should be contingency plans (e.g. Buses) immediately called into action during a breakdown. Such incidents are unfortunate, but the response to them should show care for passengers and preparedness. Not confusion.

And now, fare increases? Show me an acceptable response to a train breakdown and I’ll abide by some fare increases.

I am a visually impaired/partially blind customer using the VRE to travel each day to work in Alexandria from my newly purchased home in the Belmont Bay subdivision of Woodbridge. My recent experiences with your system have been disappointing, stressful, and unfortunate in all respects.
I moved one year ago to the Washington DC metro area from the San Francisco Bay Region of California, where I have spent the majority of my life. In 52 years as a lifelong mass transit rider...using commuter trains and subway systems in cities as large and varied as San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, Seattle, and Portland OR, I have NEVER encountered a major metropolitan area with such poor management of its public transit systems.

I both recognize and appreciate that VRE has positioned itself as a commuter rail system, and that you do not control or own the rail line between Fredericksburg and Union Station in DC. That being said...I have used both the Metra trains in Chicago, and CalTrain on the Peninsula (San Francisco to San Jose) in California, which have similar challenges but which have FAR MORE SERVICE and FAR MORE ON TIME PERFORMANCE and RELIABILITY.

It is shameful and a public disgrace, that in our nation’s capitol region....your commuter trains are limited to a handful each day, with frequent (three occasions in the last 7 working days!) delays which place riders in an untenable situation. It is not enough that one train is delayed and that one must wait for the next...there are often NO trains at all. Today (Tuesday March 7), I planned to take Train 312 at 7:52 am. If I had relied purely on your system...given all your mechanical delays and repeated cancellations...I would not have left Woodbridge until 11:30-12:00. Such a delay is OUTRAGEOUS. Where are the commuter buses to bridge train failures ? Where are the replacement trains to take extra passengers ? Where are the alternatives for those of us who NEED and MUST get to work ?

I pay $222 a month for a VRE pass. Yet...within the last week, I have had to purchase separate and costly Step Up Tickets on THREE occasions to use Amtrak to get to work. That is not an alternative solution...it is an expectation on your part, that Amtrak will solve what are YOUR issues.

So...when I learned of a proposed fare increase in July...I was astounded. To ask riders to pay MORE for LESS SERVICE, LESS RELIABILITY, and LESS COMMITMENT on your part...is a failure of customer service and public trust at the highest level.

PLEASE VRE - WORK HARDER TO SERVE THOSE THAT DEPEND ON YOU.

As one of the initial passengers in 1992 when the VRE was first launched, it seemed like a good alternative at the time.....and for a time it was. However, over the past 10 years on-time service/dependability/mechanical functions and fare increases closely resemble what has happened to the Metro subway system. VRE’s neglect in not replacing their overly-used equipment and locomotives after the first decade or so and having the blatant audacity to raise fares for such poor service is exactly what brought Metro to the condition it is in today. In 2005 I had had enough of the rarely ever on time service, the breakdowns and the high fares. I found alternative commuter bus service from Woodbridge and have been using it ever since. It is reliable, comfortable, fares are reasonable, drivers are most accommodating and pleasant.

VRE will soon (if not already) discover that raising fares will not solve or fix any of their problems. A more knowledgeable Operations Manager better qualified and experienced in the commuter world of overlapping financial districts responsible for funds, may be a more effective way in providing reliable commuter railroad transportation at a reasonable fare.

I live in Woodbridge, VA and pay $241.70 per month currently. I think it is outrageous that the VRE management, at this ticket. Price, feels it needs to increase fares again. For that short distance from Woodbridge, VA to Washington DC is overpriced. The VRE appears to be following in the footsteps of the Metro. I am beginning to lose trust with the VRE staff and will never move further south to where I am fully dependent on you people to get to work.
Your timing of the fare increase email could have been better. It was sent out at the same time that a train broke down for hours forcing passengers to eventually disembark at Woodbridge.

Do you really think it is fair to raise the rates when we continue to have poor service? I am writing this from train #312 which is again suffering mechanical issues for the second time in three days. We continue to be late on a regular basis on both morning and evening runs.

Yes, I understand that more money means - in theory - more maintenance work but that is never truly the case. More money from us, the riders, really just means more money into some executive's pocket...Probably on the CSX line, not VREs.

Yes, we get FRCs when we are late, but how do they help those of us with monthly tickets? They don't. So think of another way to help us out...Discounts on the next month or something.

Anyway, the timing of this increase is unfortunate due to the issues we've been having, and our current level of dissatisfaction with the service. It beats driving, but not by as much as it once did.

How about getting us to and from work on time more often. You don't deserve a fare increase. If Congress reduces or eliminates the subsidy I'm taking a van pool instead.

What changed in Operations $$$ since last fare hike?

I must say that I am very upset about the proposed fare increase.

I do not work for the government. My company does NOT pay for my commute from Brook. I am sure there are quite a few others who can attest to this. This proposed amount of $307.90 will come from my already stretched paycheck. If this happens, I will have to slug. I am sure this doesn't affect your company as you are looking at the new ridership, not so much at the tried and true riders from the past.

I will attend the public hearings even though I know this is a done deal on your behalf. Didn't affect the past fare hikes you “proposed”, so this will be no different. Truly, why bother? My disappointment in the VRE is great. I feel as though I am being robbed.

While i would like to see specifically how the VRE calculates/justifies fares i fully support the increase.

Will Amtrak still accept the $5 Step Up Ticket if it has not expired yet?

Federal Employees have not had a raise of any consequence in the past 7 years, my bi-weekly raise effective in January 2017 equated to less than $25.00. We cannot afford and increase of any kind on VRE rates. My agency also does not pay anywhere near the full transit benefit, in fact less than half of it and further more the transit benefit will probably go away next year with the budgets being proposed. I have been riding the VRE since July 16, 1992 and this type of fare increase will likely cause me to stop the bleeding and stop riding VRE and begin slugging into DC.
Please do not implement a fare increase this year.

I have been riding for over twenty years and fully understand the need for the fare increases. The ride is worth it. However, I am trying to understand why Manassas Line riders are on the same pay scale as Fredericksburg.

As you already know, Fredericksburg has 8 Northbound (a.m.) Trains (one being an express) and 8 Southbound (p.m.) trains whereas Manassas has only 6 (a.m.) Northbound trains and 7 Southbound (p.m.) trains and not one is an express. Fredericksburg also has many more station options and a nice new station whereas Manassas hasn’t had a new one since I have started riding. Manassas line riders shouldn’t be paying the same for fewer service options. This increase should go on the Fredericksburg line.

I understand that would be a whole new rate system. Another option could be is some updates and new services to the Manassas line. We have had nothing added and options taken away. How about bringing back the mid morning train? What about an express train for the Manassas side? What ever happened to the VRE going down 28. I realize the Gainesville option is out but years ago I thought there was talk about extending service to Catlett or Bealeton. Many thanks for your time on this subject!

VRE does a fine job, and you deserve a fare increase of at least 3 percent.

Thank you. I’m happy to help defray costs in such fashion.

I understand the need to increase the VRE fares - what I do not understand is the lack of proportionality with the amtrak step up fare increase. I would like to understand the planned step up fare increase. Back in 2015, we paid 3 dollars which went up to 5 and now we would pay 7? More than 100% increase since 2015 ? What is the reason behind this? VRE is only increasing by 4%...

I strongly oppose another increase in VRE fares. VRE leadership should provide a list of all cost-cutting measures taken to keep operating costs low before these perpetual requests for fare increases. The extension of the Fredericksburg Line to Spotsylvania and resulting increased ridership should have generated additional revenue, right? Migration to mobile ticketing surely resulted in substantial savings over paper tickets, didn’t it? Is staffing at VRE Headquarters lean or bloated? How about dispensing with full-color, paper magazines that no one reads as a start? The content is minimal and mostly filler. Do an online newsletter or email useful info to subscribers. Do we need trains leaving DC 15 minutes apart? Sure, it's nice for convenience, but wouldn't adding a few cars to one of the trains accomplish the same thing without cost of operators, fuel, etc.? Those of us without a government stipend to help offset these increases must bear the full cost, and continually passing on fare increases to faithful riders is not the only solution.

I pay $354.70 for my TLC Pass, your fare increase will add over $10 to my cost. Metro cost will also be going up in July. I’m not a federal employee so all the monies is coming out of my pocket. I can’t afford these increases every other year. I will start taking the PRTC from Woodbridge July 1st.
I ride the Amtrak five or more times a week. The increase a year ago to $5 a trip was already budget stretching. If you increase the tickets again, I will simply stop riding. I also disagree with general ticket fare increases, as gas prices are low and have been low for some time, so VRE should have been able to save money on that front. Service has also gotten noticeably worse over the last two years, with more breakdowns and late trains. If people wanted to pay more for unreliable service, they’d ride metro.

3% is too high of a price increase and should be dropped down to 1%, especially since these “increased operation costs” are not highlighted to the public. Furthermore, increasing the Amtrak step up from $5 to $7 is also quite extreme given that the sales of step up tickets could not possibly create a significant difference.

Please provide information on where the money from this Fare Increase would be allocated in your budget to the public.

I am writing in connection with the proposal to increase the VRE fares by 3% for FY2018. I do not believe that such an increase should be assessed on its customers, such as myself, who has ridden the VRE for almost 10 years. Those of us who commute to the DC-metro area on either the Manassas or Fredricksburg lines do so because this is our only available form of public transportation. We rely on the train and increasing the fares is going to have the adverse effect on the rail system, by reducing ridership because riders will be forced to re-examine the cost-benefit analysis of other transportation options and in turn, decreasing revenue for the VRE. Further, in 2015, VRE increased fares by 4%. To increase fares yet another 3% would result in a 7% increase in less than 3 years. This dramatic fare increase is a tax imposed on its riders and is not on par with other cost of living adjustments and the economy. There is no justification for why another 3% fare increase needs to be added on at this time despite the prior increase in 2015 – what has the VRE done with the funds received from the prior fare hike? I suggest that VRE look at ways to cut costs, rather than tax its riders. Thank you for your time and consideration.

My family and I recently moved from Leesburg, VA to Stafford County. Last week I started taking the VRE train from the Leeland Station platform, which is only a few miles from my new home, to Union Station. One of the main reasons I decided to start taking the VRE was the relatively low cost compared to other options, such as driving or van pool.

Another factor in the cost is that once I arrive at Union Station, I spend another approximately $4.00 taking the Red Line Metro to Bethesda (Medical Center stop). So round trip it is costing me about $28/day to get from Stafford County to Bethesda, and back home again.

Bottom line: Each time VRE fares increase, I will need to do another cost-benefit analysis to see if driving (gas, tolls, vehicle maintenance) makes more sense as opposed to taking the VRE. I can only imagine that there are many others in the same position. Please take this into account when considering fare increases.

I think there are other ways to save some money than to raise prices. First of all you can stop with those monthly VRE magazines. For the most part they get left on the seats unread and in the holders. Right there you won’t have printing cost and you won’t have cost for the people writing them. Also, the mobile tickets did not go off that great, if you stop those there are more positions
you can eliminate since very few people use that system; it will also save coast for whatever software you may be paying for.

If you should have any further questions please contact me at the information provided below.

I suggest VRE work with CSX and Amtrak to alleviate the issues plaguing the Fredericksburg line prior to proposing a fare hike. No offense, but as of late VRE hasn’t had the best on time record and if you ask people to pay more for as service that repeatedly impacts them negatively (asks Metro keeps doing) you are going to have a real PR nightmare on your hands. Also, 3% may not sound like a lot, but that has a huge impact on those of us who rely on public transport and have limited income, particularly when Federal reimbursement for travel isn’t keeping up with the fare increases.

Does it really every matter about what the public expresses about fare increases? We all know that when VRE sends out message about ‘public gatherings to discuss fare increases’ that it should be titled ’HEADS UP everyone - we are about to increase fares within the next X month!

EVERY SINGLE YEAR you have a fare increase. You need to take a serious look at your budgeting and your contract negotiations. You are obviously NOT living within your means, and I find it disgraceful that your faithful riders have to pay the price. Furthermore, I find it shocking that you would actually submit a fiscal year budget that includes a fare increase rather than cutting back on new programs! It’s a very simple equation – not enough revenue=no new capital projects. Period!

If riders don’t reap the benefits when fuel prices are low (which, comparatively, they have been VERY low for at least a year now), then I hardly think it’s fair that VRE should reap any benefit from running at a deficit every single year. Where IS the money that you should have made up in fuel savings?! I didn’t see that mentioned anywhere!

The angrier your riders get, the less ridership you will have. Your credibility with the Government must also be getting questionable – as is indicated by the 10% cut in state funding. If they really believed in you and what you could bring to them, they would make it happen. Get your financial house in order, VRE!

I propose that the ridership that would benefit the most from the increase in fare share a great increase. Release the Manassas line from sharing the same load to building a new stop (Spotsylvania station) as well as paying for an additional train on the Fredericksburg line. I also assume that most if not all of the 13 additional cars purchased will also go towards the Fredericksburg line as well. It should be prorated based on who the funds increase will directly support. Understood that some of the funding will support staff and HQ updates but your own justification for this was heavily slanted for the Fredericksburg Line.

The Fredericksburg line should shoulder a 6-8% percent increase and the Manassas line could be reduced to 2-3% increase.

You provide no additional service but continue to hike the rates. Shameless.