

AGENDA ITEM #7

TO: CHAIRMAN KAUFFMAN AND THE VRE OPERATIONS BOARD
FROM: DALE ZEHNER
DATE: MARCH 16, 2007
RE: VRE RIDERS' COMMENTS

For your consideration, attached are a variety of emails and/or communications received by VRE from our riders.

The comments and suggestions received usually tend to be positive in nature and supportive of the undertakings VRE is trying to incorporate to make their ride on VRE better.

E-MAIL:

Date: January 22, 2007
Subject: 4:30 am notification

Please give some consideration to making schedule change notification prior to 4:30am. I am one of many commuters that drive an hour prior to catching the VRE. I leave my home by 4am every morning to catch the 5:05am train out of Broad Run. Your schedule change notification at 4:30am does not help me. Any consideration to revising your notification to 4am would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.

RESPONSE:

From: Adam Otsuka
Date: February 1, 2007

Thank you for writing.

We apologize if our notifications do not reach you before you leave for Broad Run/Airport. We realize some of our riders have considerable commutes prior to reaching VRE's service area. While we understand your concerns, we need to ensure that we have complete information. Currently the 4:30 AM notification allows us to provide information in sufficient time for the vast majority of our riders while providing it late enough so that any "last-minute" issues that may arise as trains, stations and other facilities are serviced in the night can either be remedied or identified and included in our notification.

While we realize this is not the answer you had been hoping for, we hope it addresses your concern. Thank you for riding VRE.

Sincerely,
Adam Otsuka

E-MAIL:

Date: January 27, 2007
Subject: Acts of random kindness

I experienced a wonderful week on VRE and observed two incidents of kindness and compassion.

The first occurred on Wednesday afternoon on train 303 a passenger with a disability got onto the Fredericksburg line instead of the Manassas. As the train was arriving at the Springfield station a rider realized the gentleman was on the wrong train and needed to disembark. By the time passenger gathered his belongings the train departed. The conductor was notified however it was too late. The conductor assisted in preparing the gentleman to disembark at Lorton. Those of us on the train with him were concerned about how he would make his way back to Alexandria. At Lorton the conductor escorted the passenger outside for a bus, however another train rider picked the gentleman up to return him to the Alexandria station to catch the Manassas line. Everyone on the train was thankful to see he get a ride instead of waiting in the cold for a bus.

Yesterday, I rode train 95 Amtrak home and a gentleman fell outside the station. The few passengers that disembarked quickly ran to the fallen gentleman's aid. He had cut his forehead, but appeared ok except for being shaken up.

It is wonderful to see that our VRE family demonstrates such acts of kindness. I'd again like to thank the Young Lady that helped the disabled passenger as well as my co-riders that help the fallen gentleman. God Bless America!

RESPONSE:

From: Erica Cobb
Date: February 8, 2007

Thank you for writing and sharing the acts of kindness that you witnessed by your fellow train riders. It is these kinds of people that make VRE so special.

Thank you again for sharing your positive experiences with us.

As always, thank you for riding VRE.

Sincerely,
Erica Cobb

E-MAIL:

Date: January 29, 2007
Subject: Quantico Bridge Schedules

To VRE Management

On behalf of a very large number of VRE riders, I would like to recommend the following:

Phase Three: March 26 - March 30

Instead of running the current "S" Schedule, run a modified "S" Schedule to include train 300 in the morning and 303 in the evening. The justification for this is it will benefit the largest number of riders who take trains 300 and 303 and it would cause less crowding. You will be doing us a big favor if you do it this way. The current plan is going to cause MAJOR crowding. Also, the riders of train 300 always have to give way to train 302 riders. It's time to change!

Shouldn't the riders have some say in this? Would you at least put it to a vote!!! We have time.

Please respond

I would like to add one additional item to my previous message.

Doesn't it make more sense for train 302 riders to get in to work 20 minutes early instead of train 300 riders getting in to work 20 minutes late?

RESPONSE:

From: Erica Cobb
Date: February 20, 2007

Thank you for writing and we received both of your concerns.

In order to operate the varying schedules for the Quantico Bridge signal cut-in all companies that utilize those tracks have to compromise certain aspects of their service in attempt to reduce delays. Amtrak has canceled some of their trains, CSX will re-route some trains out of the area, and we are running a limited schedule.

We understand that some riders would have preferred to have trains 300 and 303 operate to alleviate crowding on our trains. In order to combat crowding aboard our "S" schedule trains, the consists will be lengthened of their normal sets.

With regards to not operating train 300 during Phase 3 of the Quantico Bridge project, the decision was made to operate the regular "S" schedule in order to alleviate any confusion for riders regarding the various schedule changes during that time. We know that it may not be a popular decision among some riders. However, as we go through Phase II we will revisit our Phase III and Phase IV schedules and see if any changes need to be made.

As always, thank you for riding VRE.

Sincerely,
Erica Cobb

E-MAIL:

Date: February 19, 2007
Subject: Great job to CSX and VRE!

You have done outstanding job of keeping us informed. Thank you!
Please keep up the great work
Fredericksburg rider

RESPONSE:

From: April Maguigad
Date: February 21, 2007

Thank you for your support. This has been a very important project for us. We are glad that our efforts to keep our trains operating as close to normal as possible have not gone unnoticed.

Please let us know if we can be of further assistance. Thank you for riding VRE.

Sincerely,
April Maguigad

E-MAIL:

Date: February 22, 2007
Subject: VRE Performance for January

I was looking at the performance for January in the newsletter this morning. I meant to take a copy with me, but forgot. Is that report on line anywhere?

Thank you.

RESPONSE:

From: Detrius Bolton
Date: February 23, 2007

Thank you for writing. All of our newsletters are available on-line. Simply visit our website at <http://www.vre.org/service/seatnote.htm>. The second issue of the month has included performance statistics for the previous month.

Please let us know if we can be of further assistance. Thank you for riding VRE.

Sincerely,
Detrius Bolton

E-MAIL:

Date: February 1, 2007
Subject: Burke Centre Construction Project

It's great that you are keeping the Burke Centre riders up to date on the status of the parking garage construction, and the inconvenience will be well worth it once we have a parking garage BUT it sure would have been nice to know that they were planning to close off a whole section of the parking lot TODAY and start digging up a major part of the road through the lot to the station.

I got there this morning prior to the 330, around 7:15 am, and was prevented from pulling into the section I was aiming for (near the exit) by a worker. I pulled into another space and proceeded to listen to the news before heading out to the cold platform, when I was shocked to see an excavator right next to my car digging up the road. I'm crossing my fingers that my car will be intact when I return tonight!

It would have been helpful to riders to know this in advance to be prepared for the change (I would have started taking the shuttle today rather than waiting until Monday, as I planned), and given the early start on this part of the construction, why didn't they open up the new spaces that are ready to be put into use?

Communication is key.

RESPONSE:

From: Larry Sternbane
Date: February 23, 2007

Thank you for contacting VRE.

We apologize for the inconvenience that you and your fellow riders at Burke Centre are experiencing as a result of the new parking garage construction project. Please note that this project is being managed by the Fairfax County Department of Public Works, and not by VRE. Project schedules are set by the County, and like schedules for any large project, they are subject to change.

Had we known that there were significant changes underway earlier than planned, we certainly would have sent out notifications so that our riders could plan

accordingly. Unfortunately, we did not learn about these changes until it was too late.

With the second phase of construction well underway, we hope that things have settled somewhat at Burke. We hope that you are finding the shuttle service provided by the County to be convenient and comfortable.

We appreciate your patience and understanding during this phase of construction. The payoff will be well worth today's inconvenience -- a new parking garage that we can all be proud of.

Please let us know if we can be of further assistance. Thanks for riding VRE.

Sincerely,
Larry Sternbane

E-MAIL:

Date: February 15, 2007
Subject: questions re the incentive ticket program

What is with the incentive ticket program? It does not seem to be advertised well; last week a few people on the bus seemed to be aware of it, but it is hard to find information. Will the program be here for the duration of the building at Burke? I ride from the Burke library satellite lot so it seems to apply not just to the EZ busses, but to the parking lot shuttles. Is it to fight losing passengers over the next 18 months while building is going on? Seems inconsistent to give up the FRC program and replace it with another program that gives me back 20% of my monthly ticket cost.

RESPONSE:

From: Ryan Lange
Date: February 27, 2007

Thank you for writing.

The 20% discount was implemented in 2003 as incentive for passengers to use the EZ Bus to help relieve parking congestion at Burke Centre. Now that the construction is taking place and parking is tighter than ever, we have extended the discount for the St. Mary's and Library Shuttle as well.

If you'd like an incentive card, simply ask the bus driver for one as you board your bus. Each time you ride the bus you will get a "punch" on your card. Once you

accumulate 15 "punches", mail the card with your tickets to VRE along with a completed rebate form. Within 10 working days of receipt, VRE will rebate you 20% of your monthly ticket or 4 ten-trip tickets.

If you have further questions about this program, please let us know.

Thank you for riding VRE.

Sincerely,
Ryan Lange