

2018 ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS – Part 2

Due to the great number of questions received, responses will be published in rounds. Part 2 represents only a portion of all questions received.

The below document contains all questions sent to VIA Rail leading up to and during the 2018 Annual Public Meeting webcast. Thank you to everyone who participated in the meeting and sent us their questions.

Please note that questions of the same nature have been grouped together. Grammar and syntax of the questions received have been corrected. In this document you will find all questions and answers for topics relating to:

1. [Accessibility](#)
2. [VIA Préférence](#)
3. [Mechanical & Maintenance](#)
4. [Sales](#)
5. [Web & Booking](#)
6. [Environment & Safety](#)

ACCESSIBILITY

1. **I enjoy travelling by train, but I do not use that mode of travel as much as I'd like anymore, because of asthma / respiratory allergies. I found that on my last trip I could not comfortably/ safely use the dining room/ observation car because of scented personal product use. Has VIA Rail considered adding 1 line to its ticket purchase information website to politely address concerns like this?**

If you suffer from an allergic reaction to scented products worn by persons seated nearby, specific measures may be taken by VIA Rail to minimize your exposure to such products by reassigning the seating of customers. Please contact customer services at 1-888 VIA-RAIL (1-888 842-7245) or 1 800 268-9503 (for the hearing-impaired) at least 48 hours before your departure in order to make a Special Service Request. VIA reserves the right to require that medical documentation be provided describing the customer's specific condition and what constitutes an adequate accommodation.

When a customer indicates that special arrangements are required due to severe allergies, a VIA Rail Contact Centre agent will refer the request to a Customer Relations Specialist for handling. A Customer Relations Specialist will request medical documentation and accommodations will be made according to the customer's needs and feasibility.

2. **I am the preference member holder and would like to book an accessible seat, do I also receive the reduced cost to accompany my spouse who needs my assistance?**

Yes, you may travel as your spouse's support person and also occupy the wheelchair tie-down. Passengers who cannot travel alone without a Support Person may travel with a companion

capable of providing the required assistance. For all details on this policy please consult our [website](#).

3. Hello my husband and I both have accessibility issues: I use a walker and my husband uses a cane. Do you give discount also do you charge extra for walker never been on VIA Rail.

No additional costs are incurred for passengers travelling with their mobility aids. When departing from a station with personnel, our staff can escort you to the platform, assist you in boarding and disembarking from the train, and help with loading and unloading your baggage. You can even benefit from priority boarding five minutes before regular boarding commences.

To ensure that your individual needs are met and that your trip is as comfortable and pleasant as possible, we recommend that you contact us by telephone at 1 888 VIA-RAIL (1 888 842-7245) or in person at one of our ticket counters to let us know if any special services will be required during your trip. VIA Rail requires a minimum of forty-eight hours' advance notice of any special service requests.

4. Will you be considering specials for disabled travelling with an assistant?

Also what is the cost for a companion? Companion – Support Person?

VIA Rail has a free Support Person policy. Passengers who cannot travel alone without a Support Person may travel with a companion capable of providing the required assistance. For all details on this policy please consult our [website](#).

5. How accessible are your trains for across Canada tours? Also what is the cost for a companion?

All of our trainsets include a car that is wheelchair-accessible and equipped with tie-downs, grab bars in washrooms and narrow wheelchairs to make it easier to move around onboard. On our western and eastern transcontinental services an accessible cabin for two offers all the necessary amenities to accommodate a person with reduced mobility and their companion. VIA Rail has a free Support Person policy.

VIA Rail has also awarded Bombardier a contract to upgrade 17 stainless steel trains to create a new fully accessible generation of cars to be redeployed over the long-haul routes. In order to offer a higher level of accessibility, the engineering criteria were determined in accordance with the highest standards of universal accessibility. This renovation program is scheduled to be completed by 2020. Each reconfigured car will be equipped with: two wheelchair lifts; two accessible spaces with anchoring devices; announcement display screens, including in the washrooms; an accessible washroom.

6. Where does one access trains when you live well outside of Toronto or other major centers? One needs to use a car usually to get to station and parking long term can be an issue

For more information, please consult the various station profiles available on our website to review parking options.

7. I would like to know what arrangements are available to facilitate travel for people with respiratory and physical conditions.

To make your travel experience easier and more enjoyable, VIA Rail provides a priority boarding service offering assistance with boarding and disembarking to passengers with reduced mobility and respiratory issues.

For these services, be sure to book your trip at least 48 hours before your departure and specify the services required to a sales agent at the time of booking. You can reach an agent at 1-888-VIA-RAIL (1-888-842-7245) or TTY 1-800-268-9503 (hard of hearing).

8. Are all of VIA Rail's trains (for every destination) wheelchair accessible?

All VIA Rail trains are wheelchair accessible and are equipped with tie-downs and grab bars in the washrooms, and wheelchairs adapted to fit the dimensions of the train. For transcontinental trains in the west and east, the accessible cabin for two people offers amenities to accommodate a person with reduced mobility and a companion.

9. Is it possible to travel with VIA Rail if we have limited mobility?

Passengers with reduced mobility will receive special attention from our staff. However, services offered will differ from one region to another, notably due to station and train car layout. For more information on the special services we offer, please contact a sales agent at 1 888 VIA-RAIL (1 888 842-7245) or at TTY 1-800-268-9503 (hard of hearing).

10. How can you further help elderly people who take the train?

To ensure you have an easy and comfortable travel experience, VIA Rail offers the following services: priority boarding, baggage assistance, help with boarding and disembarking for passengers with reduced mobility, and special services upon request. To receive these services, ensure that you book your trip 48 hours prior to departure and to specify to a sales agent at the time of booking which services you will require.

11. I have to be accompanied when I travel by train. I cannot hear the messages over the loud speakers and I walk with a cane. Are there special deals for people with reduced mobility and their Support Person?

Passengers who cannot travel without a Support Person may be accompanied by someone who will assist them. The Support Person, who must be at least 12 years of age, will travel for free in the same service class. For more information on the Support Person service, please consult our [website](#).

Accessibility (Equipment)

1. When will more accessible accommodations be made available on VIA Rail cars in all routes across Canada?

What are the short and long term plans for increasing accessibility?

Currently, our eastern long haul trains (the *Ocean*) include one accessible Sleeper car which is equipped with an accessible cabin. Our western long haul trains (the *Canadian*) include the Prestige car which is equipped with an accessible cabin. All VIA Rail trains are accessible to

travellers with reduced mobility and are equipped with wheelchair tie-downs, grab bars in washrooms and narrow wheelchairs for boarding, detraining and accessing the washrooms.

Looking forward in the shorter term, VIA Rail has awarded a contract to Bombardier for the transformation of 17 cars to full accessibility. All of the cars should be in service by 2020.

In the longer term, Transport Canada has allotted funding for the acquisition of a new fleet of trains for VIA Rail. This fleet will take into account the highest levels of accessibility. We expect the first cars of this new fleet to be in service by 2022, with full delivery of all new trainsets by 2024.

2. Will new trains be wheelchair accessible?

Yes, the new fleet will be fully accessible for wheelchairs and will take into account the highest levels of accessibility.

3. What accessibility features are planned, if any, for the upcoming year? Please identify specifics and whether or not the plan is to make all stations and equipment fully accessible for all travellers.

Other than adding one more wheelchair accessible spot, have any improvements been made to accommodate wheelchair dependent clients?

When will you be able to make the cars easier for disabled and/or injured customers to climb in and out of?

We are currently updating 17 train cars to full accessibility. They will be complete by 2020 and will include the following features:

- Wheelchair lift
- Accessible washroom providing space for toilet transfer and wheelchair U-turn radius of 1500mm
- Two mobility aid spaces for wheelchairs with table
- Transfer seats
- Two spaces for guide dogs
- Grab bars

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It is VIA Rail's practice to maintain its stations accessible to current standards and the Canadian Transportation Agency eligibility rules. VIA Rail's 2018-2020 station capital program addresses within defined and prioritized station programs, various accessibility improvements opportunities. Some of the accessibility features planned for improvements are vertical elevating systems, washrooms, ticket counters, platform, and parking lots.

4. Any chance for space for more people in wheelchairs?

When will VIA provide real accessibility, and allow 2 people in wheelchairs (who both need a tie-down spot) to travel together?

We are currently working on a plan that will allow for two (2) mobility aid spaces per trainset in the Québec City – Windsor corridor.

As well, our new fleet of trains will take into account the highest level of accessibility and the chosen supplier will propose a new configuration of mobility aid spaces on the trains.

5. As the track is not always smooth, would you install grab-bars along the ceiling on both sides between the rearmost seat and the washroom?

Our new fleet of trains will include grab bars as much as possible in the accessible area, corridor and vestibule, as well as in the washroom.

VIA PRÉFÉRENCE

1. Why can't I buy multiple tickets for other people and receive my VIA Rail points?

I am paying for a friend's train ticket. Is it possible to receive those points in my account?

Why do I not get points when I buy tickets for the grandson?

VIA Préférence members can only accumulate points on their own individual travel. Many other loyalty programs abide by the same policy.

2. I just purchased a ticket but I don't see the points added to my VIA Préférence total. When does that, or how does that happen?

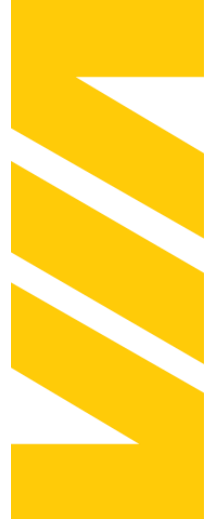
How long after travel does it take for points to show up in my Preference account?

After a trip is completed, please allow up to 72 hours for VIA Préférence points to be deposited into your account.

3. Why can't VIA Rail allow underage children to be counted on the VIA members account?

VIA Préférence members can only accumulate points on their own individual travel. Many other loyalty programs abide by the same policy. Infants and toddlers under two years of age travel for free, provided that they do not occupy a seat. With consent of a parent or legal guardian, they can be enrolled in the program and are eligible to start accumulating points for their own travel as soon as they turn two.

4. Could we receive our train ticket credit for delays incurred while traveling directly to our VIA Préférence card rather than having to buy another ticket within six months in order to benefit from it?

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VIA Préférence members may earn VIA Préférence points rather than a travel credit for delays incurred while traveling. For each dollar of travel credit to which they are eligible, the member receives five VIA Préférence points. For more information or to inquire about your rewards points, please contact the VIA Préférence Service Center at viapreference@viarail.ca or call 1-888-842-7733, [indicating that you would like to apply for rewards points instead of a travel credit.](#)

5. Are there any upgrades expected to VIA Rail's Préférence program in the next year?

Is it possible to come out with new offers for the reward points system?

VIA Rail is continually looking to improve and evolve the VIA Préférence program. We are currently exploring different options and projects.

6. As VIA Rail Préférence member I would like to have the option to use the VIP Lounges at designated VIA Rail stations. I understand it is designated for business class passengers, but could the option also be given to Préférence members?

Our Business lounges are very popular and due to capacity constraints, access is currently limited to passengers traveling in Business, Sleeper Plus, and Prestige classes. VIA Préférence members who have reached Premier level can also access it if they travel with an Economy Plus fare ticket or with an Economy Bizpak.

7. Among the new deals, are free trips still available with a set number of points?

Yes, absolutely. Free travel starts at just 550 points in the Québec City – Windsor corridor. For more information, please consult our [reward chart](#).

8. Why can't college students with a VIA Préférence account (like my daughter) use less points for business travel than adults?

We don't have any Business class offers for students, but members aged 12 to 25 can redeem their points for a ticket for 20% fewer points than the adult redemption fare in Economy class. They need to use the "Youth" passenger type to benefit from this exclusive discount online.

9. Why can't VIA Préférence points be used to switch to an earlier train? There is usually an upgrade fee to a fare to take an earlier train but staff will not allow the use of VIA Preference Points to 'pay' for that upgrade.

Unfortunately, VIA Préférence points cannot currently be used to purchase service upgrades such as boarding an earlier train, traveling in a higher travel fare, or purchasing products onboard the train or at the station. VIA Préférence points can, for now, only be used to redeem a free trip. However, we do appreciate your comment and will be sure to take it into account in evaluating future program enhancement possibilities.

10. Can the points needed for trips be posted on your site?

Our reward chart can always be found in the [Redeeming](#) section of our website. Here you can see how many points you need.

11. Can family members share points and credits?

Would VIA ever consider opening the preference point system as a family pack? Several family members contribute points to the same account...For example, when points are used for travel, can you get an additional bonus if you have a buddy traveling on the same day?

As is the case with most travel loyalty programs, VIA Préférence members accumulate points only for their own individual travel. The program serves to reward VIA Rail passengers and, as such, a member cannot transfer their points to anyone else. However, a member may book reward travel for someone else using their points.

12. And what ever happened to the points that were given out every May?

We are unclear what your question is referring to specifically, and encourage you to send more information to customer_relations@viarail.ca so we can respond with more detail.

13. Why am I signed up to receive deals through e-mail but never receive them? This is the first e-mail I have received.

All customers that have consented to receive VIA Rail emails should receive our Discount Tuesday email. If you are not, we invite you to contact the VIA Customer Centre at 1 888 VIA-RAIL (1 888 842-7245) and one of our agents will be happy to verify your account and make sure you are signed up to receive our promotional emails, if you so desire.

14. Why can't reward members buy points to help get enough points for free reward travel?

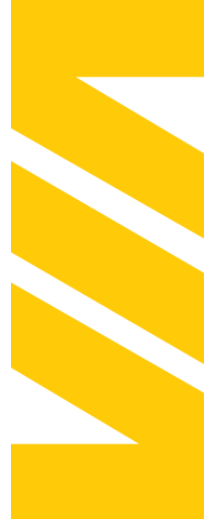
Any chance you'll offer buying points at some time soon like AMTRAK does?

VIA Rail is considering this feature as well as other ways for members to earn points faster. Members will be advised if and when any changes are implemented.

15. Have you considered upgrading preference members to open business class seats in the same vein as airlines do (for rewards members who maintain a certain amount of points)?

VIA Rail is continually looking to improve and evolve the VIA Préférence program. We are currently exploring different options/projects. We appreciate your suggestion and will evaluate it as a possible future program enhancement.

16. I get weekly suggested trips but never do the trips include a Hamilton departure. Why not tailor some trips starting from the city where the participant lives?

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The weekly Discount Tuesday email features only a select few routes. If you are planning a trip, we invite you to visit our [Lowest Fares page](#) on Tuesdays where you will find all of our Discount Tuesday deals.

17. What are the points equal to? When do you get to use points? Can I transfer accumulated points into my mother's name?

VIA Préférence points can be used to redeem free trips, and reward travel starts at just 550 points in the Québec city – Windsor corridor. See our [reward chart](#) for more information. VIA Préférence points belong to the members who have earned them and cannot be transferred. However, you may book reward travel for someone else using your points.

18. I would like to know if VIA Rail has ever considered a rewards program through the use of a designated credit card.

Thank you for your suggestion. It is something we have considered but currently have no plans to introduce.

19. Why is it that you guys can't strike an Alliance with Amtrak allowing families to use the many VIA Rail points they have accumulated, to be used to go to US Cities? Please could you have a points program agreement with Amtrak, similar to those under Star Alliance in the airline industry?

We do acknowledge the potential value for members of both programs of such an opportunity. We appreciate your suggestion and will evaluate it as a possible future program enhancement.

20. I signed up for surveys but I haven't completed any because the points reward is only indicated after the survey begins. Will the survey reward structure be improved to make it more efficient and encourage more feedback?

We value your feedback and will share it with our partner AskingCanadians who manages the research panel you subscribed to.

21. Why can I not use my points to purchase a Prestige Sleeper class on the Canadian?

Since 2017, Prestige class redemptions are available for travel between November 1 and April 30. They must be booked through the VIA Customer Centre (1 888 VIA PREF). See all the conditions [here](#).

22. Why have you cancelled the use of Air Miles?

AIR MILES collectors can still redeem their AIR MILES points for eVouchers and then use them to purchase any VIA Rail ticket or product to travel across our network, just like with cash. There are no conditions to meet (other than our normal fare conditions if you want to purchase discounted tickets with your gift card). To redeem your AIR MILES points for VIA eVouchers, please call AIR MILES toll-free number: 1 888 247-6453.

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MECHANICAL & MAINTENANCE

- 1. Why are economy cars on VIA 1 and VIA 2 in such poor condition? Washrooms are often not working and staff cannot fix the problem. Seats are torn and certainly not clean with metal coming through the material making travel very uncomfortable. I have noted cars in the Corridor are already in good condition.**

We recognize that our cars assigned to the *Canadian* trains require significant investment which is why we have recently initiated a program to bring the fleet into a state of good repair while improving accessibility characteristics. Contracts were awarded to Cad Railway Industries and Bombardier for the renovation of 42 train coach cars including 17 cars that will form a new fully accessible generation of cars. This work will significantly increase the number of refurbished 1950s-era cars to better serve our clients. The program is scheduled to be completed in 2020. These contracts are in addition to 33 HEP 2 business and economy cars currently under renovation, and other recent programs that were completed over the past years by VIA Rail's Montreal Maintenance Centre experts. Meanwhile, the mechanical department remains focused to continue to address substandard maintenance items.

- 2. When will you sanitize and clean the onboard toilets?**

Toilet bowls, toilet shroud and toilet floors are cleaned daily, and, also as required, with germicidal cleaners. The components used on the toilet system are standard in the industry and designed for this type of application, and there is no urine absorption. This said, the Mechanical department has introduced a process to react faster to needed areas.

- 3. How might you consider addressing issues of washroom cleanliness and odour on trains in the Québec City-Windsor corridor? What is the plan, if any, to upgrade these cars, or at least the washrooms?**

Depending on the type of equipment, some cars are going through an overhaul program while others have had their programs already completed. Our long-term plan is to entirely replace our current Corridor fleet with new and modern equipment, starting in 2022. Any time a toilet is reported with bad smell, the toilet shroud is removed and a toilet base inspection is performed. We also ensure that the retention tank gases do not seep back to the car. The toilet retention tanks are also rinsed with water when serviced. Training videos have also been prepared to improve the diagnosing of toilet issues and the quality of repairs.

- 4. Is there more certainty re: the trains functioning well when it is very cold (-30 or greater)?**

The safety and wellbeing of our passengers is our priority and we will continue to closely monitor our train performance and on-board conditions particularly during extreme cold temperature. Although this unfortunate event, we are thankful for how the community of Spy Hill, Saskatchewan, responded to assist our passengers in December. We are, however, continuously learning from these events and are implementing measures intended to *minimize* the impact of cold weather on our operations and passengers.

5. Where are VIA Rail cars and engines manufactured?

Most of the engines and cars are refurbished both internally and externally. We have awarded a contract to Bombardier as part of our Heritage Fleet modernization plan for the conversion of 17 HEP-1 Economy Class to make them fully accessible. Another contract for 25 HEP-1 economy coach cars were awarded to Cad Railway Industries. In addition, the VIA Rail Montreal Maintenance Centre was mandated to renovate 33 HEP-2 Economy and Business Class cars. These cars will allow us to continue standardizing the on-board passenger experience.

6. The VIA Rail corporate plan for 2016-20 says of the Corridor Renaissance cars, "Their mild steel car bodies are corroding at the roof, side sills and posts," and "A minimum overhaul/repair is needed to resolve HVAC problems, interior/exterior roof leaks, corrosion, door/step operation, public address systems and interior conditions". Do the Renaissance cars used on the *Ocean* suffer from the same problems? If so, how is this being addressed? When will the Renaissance cars now in use on the *Ocean* reach the end of their useful service life?

Issues on most Renaissance cars are generally similar: the mild steel roof-car bodies have all been repaired eight years ago, and the condition of the Renaissance fleet structure is sound. The state of good repair program on a total of 27 *Ocean* Renaissance cars has been completed. While there is no comprehensive state of good repair program on Corridor Renaissance cars, the Mechanical department continues to adjust its maintenance plan as required to optimize our service delivery before we introduce the new Corridor fleet into service beginning in 2022.

SALES

1. How do you plan to increase sales/traffic from international tourists? For example, a travel plan to discover the country, etc.

VIA Rail's Sales team currently works with both international and domestic travel trade partners to create and promote unique experiences, highlighting all of our routes, to every major market.

2. I am a travel agent and I often suggest to my clients to take the train. What kind of compensation or deals do you offer to incentivize travel agents to continue promoting VIA Rail services?

VIA Rail offers a familiarization program intended to provide our valued agent partners with the opportunity to experience VIA Rail first-hand by travelling with agent rates on routes throughout our network. VIA Rail has a limited number of travel vouchers available throughout the year and requests may be sent to ad75@viarail.ca. Prior to making your request, please review our full terms and conditions to ensure that your trip meets our eligibility criteria.

3. Do you give incentive to develop sustainable tourism packages with VIA Rail? And do you give carbon emission reports to compare with other methods of transport?

Qualified Tour Operators may receive net pricing to create VIA Rail packages. Emission comparisons are available on our [website](#).

- 4. Why is it that customers from overseas are given stays in a hotel, but local residences were not given any compensation even though we suffers the same frustration of the delay in departure time?**

Hotels are offered to customers who are in transit and not in their city of residence who require accommodations due to unprecedented delays. Customers who are in their city of residence are not offered a hotel as they are able to stay at their homes.

- 5. As a member of the Travel Media Association of Canada, I wonder why VIA Rail has opted to no longer choose to resume its membership?**

VIA Rail continues to work with many travel industry media professionals who are proud members of the Travel Media Association of Canada. The ongoing success of these relationships does not warrant a membership expense at this time.

- 6. Have you considered partnering with Airbnb members the same way you partnered with the car sharing services? And to include a fare lodging deal to allow people to explore different parts of Canada?**

VIA Rail does not currently have plans to partner with Airbnb or any hotels directly, however we do have tour operator partners who offer complete packages on our [website](#).

- 7. Why are there no train-hotel packages?
*Pourquoi n'y a-t-il plus de forfait train-hôtel?***

We do currently offer several train-hotel packages. You can view them here on our [website](#).

WEB & BOOKING

- 1. Why can the booking system not allow a passenger to select their preferred seat and their preferred meal -at least the preferred 'type' - especially when booking in Business Class?**

When will you update your internet booking application to allow for seat selection?

When will we be able to select our own seats?

Why can't customers see the available seats and select their seat when booking?

When booking a train, why isn't the option available to select your seat online?

Are you going to allow Business Class clients to select their own seats?

Due to the limitations of our current reservation system, seat selection is not yet available when booking online. However, we have initiated the process to replace our reservation system which

will make it possible for us to offer this long-awaited functionality. The new reservation system is expected in 2020.

This question was also answered during the Annual Public Meeting, which can be watched on [VIA Rail's YouTube channel](#).

2. How can I select the direction of my seat (forward-facing or rear-facing) when I reserve a trip online?

Due to the limitations of our current reservation system, seat selection is not yet available when booking online. However, we have initiated the process to replace our reservation system which will make it possible for us to offer this long-awaited functionality. The new reservation system is expected in 2020.

This question was also answered during the Annual Public Meeting, which can be watched on [VIA Rail's YouTube channel](#).

3. Why do you have rear facing seats?

Why are their many "rear-facing" seats in some of your trains?

The 50/50 seating configuration allows VIA Rail to operate more efficiently and is the standard for commuter and inter-city trains globally. Using this configuration means that trains no longer need to be turned around at destination, which is a big time saving measure, and provides VIA Rail with flexibility when enhancing our train schedules and potentially adding frequencies.

4. Seeing as how the trains are always late, why doesn't VIA indicate this at the time of reservation?

As in any other mode of transportation, we do experience unforeseen delays. In the case of the train, delays can be caused by freight train traffic, by extreme weather conditions, or for other reasons (please see on time performance section of this Q&A for more information).

In 2017, the on time performance of our trains in the Quebec City – Windsor corridor was 74% - meaning nearly three-fourths of our trains in that area arrived on time. In the east, on time performance was almost 86%, meaning that more than 8 out of 10 trains were on time.

However, when we know that delays are likely to occur, as is the case for our *Canadian* train (Toronto-Vancouver), passengers are warned of possible delays when reserving a ticket online, so that they can better manage and plan their journey.

If you wish to inquire about the status of a train, you can subscribe to train alerts when making your reservation online, or you can check through VIA Rail's app.

5. Why do your telephone sales agents not warn passengers booking trips on trains 1 and 2 that those trains are very likely to suffer extreme delays? Why do the e-mailed booking confirmations for those trains not include any warning about delays?

Thank you for letting us know about this. In fact, sales agents should inform you of possible delays on the *Canadian*, and we will make sure to reinforce this with the appropriate

department. As for the emailed booking confirmations, they do include warnings about potential delays.

6. Does VIA Rail has the facility to buy Passes for the period of 1 day, 4 days, 7 days, 30 days or 90 days?

According to demand, we have created passes that are based on the number of trips taken (6 trips – unlimited) or based on the time period (21, 30, 60 days, etc.). To see our range of passes offered, we invite you to visit our [Rail Pass webpage](#).

For all other needs, single tickets can be purchased – and if you book early, you can take advantage of our web-only Escape fare.

7. When booking on line, why is it necessary to repeat trip information in the case of VIA Preference members? Can your programmers arrange it so that the second request for the same information be populated at the same time that the first is generated?

Due to the limitations of our current reservation system, this functionality is not currently available. We agree that it is not optimal. We have initiated the process to replace our reservation system, and the new system will allow for this. The new reservation system is expected in 2020.

8. When booking a trip from Toronto to Quebec City your website does not indicate which trains are going via Ottawa and which are going via Montreal. Would it not be better to indicate which trains are going via Ottawa and subsequently take a lot longer to get to Quebec City?

When booking a trip online, we acknowledge that some might find it useful to access the full list of intermediary stops. However, during the reservation process online, the duration of the trip is indicated, and this will help you choose the train with the shortest trip time. If you would like to see the full list of intermediary stops, this information is available in our [Train Schedules webpage](#).

9. Does VIA Rail do charters? For example: Educational tour, Travel agency group. Is there costing of accommodation on the train vs external service providers?

Yes, VIA Rail does offer charters. You can find more information on our [Chartered Cars webpage](#), or by calling 1-888-842-0588.

10. How well can sound be run through a coach car i.e., could a coach car be a theatre? Are there specs available that an electrician or electrical engineer would find useful?

Our coach cars are equipped with sound equipment for public announcements only.

11. Now that some routes are getting to have high frequency, such as Toronto to Ottawa for example, are there any thoughts about selling open tickets?

Due to the limitations of our current reservation system, this functionality is not currently available. However, we have initiated the process to replace our reservation system which will make it possible for us to offer this functionality. The new reservation system is expected in

2020, but in the meantime, there are a variety of [passes](#) available for travellers who prefer more flexibility.

12. Why are Business class menus not posted 24 to 48 hours in advance so that passengers can choose a meal and VIA order the appropriate numbers by type?

Thank you for your suggestion. In fact, this is a popular request which we are currently working to implement on our trains. We have initiated the process to replace our reservation system which will make it possible for us to offer this long-awaited functionality. The new reservation system is expected in 2020.

13. When booking leaving from one station but returning from another, do you have to book each as "one way" or can it be done as "return"?

When making your reservation online, click on the "multi-city" option. This will allow you to book the segments between the cities of your choice. Or, if you prefer, you can book each segment as a one-way ticket.

14. When will VIA have a working app that captures and displays all tickets purchased, and not just those purchased through the VIA App?

By updating to the most recent version of our app, you will have the option to add a trip not reserved through to app to your profile.

15. Almost invariably, I am assigned a seat with a bulkhead or separator between the windows. How do you suggest that I better ensure that I am not consistently assigned such a seat, with its inferior views, when I book online?

When making a reservation online, seats are randomly assigned based on the number of travellers, destination, and preference set in your profile. If you are not satisfied with the seat chosen for you, please contact [Customer service](#) for seat reassignment.

16. Is it possible to get a list of discounts by code that we could use when making our reservations online? For example: a discount code for being a CAA member or a military veteran.

Certain discount codes can found on our website, but others are only available through the corresponding organizations. We do not offer a list of discount codes as they can only be used by qualifying parties, and others may take advantage of an offer that does not pertain to them.

You can find a list of our special offers, including the CAA and military information, on our website, here: <https://www.viarail.ca/en/fares-and-packages/special-offers>

17. Is it possible to indicate while reserving online that a trip is being taken as a family?

During the reservation process, you can indicate that you are travelling as a family, but when reserving, seats are assigned based on the number of travellers and destination, among other preferences. Therefore, whenever possible and based on availability, family members will be placed together. Should this not be the case (due to seat availability), you can call customer service, who will help you with seat assignment.

18. Why does VIA insist that you go to a station agent to buy or pay for a ticket if you are using a VIA Gift Card?

As my home station Cornwall is not manned being given gift cards twice for \$300 has been difficult to use. It requires lining up at Union Station. When can we expect to be able to use them online?

We apologize for the inconvenience and agree that this would be a good function to include in our online reservation system. Unfortunately, due to the limitations of our reservation system, this functionality is not currently available. However, we have initiated the process to replace our reservation system which will allow passengers to pay with a gift card online. The new reservation system is expected in 2020.

19. Can a Biz-Pak be considered as a gift card? The latter doesn't have a time limit to use it, according to the law.

The very competitive pricing offered for the Biz-Pak (as well as other passes) is possible in part because it must be used within a certain time period, which allows VIA Rail to plan and prepare accordingly. Therefore, we cannot offer a Biz-Pak with an unlimited expiration date. Gift cards, can be used at any time for any ticket, without limit or expiration date.

20. On two occasions I have attempted to book a train and the website was unavailable. Both times I had to call in at a later date and the price had gone up significantly. Is there any way you can design or correct your website so that this doesn't occur in the future?

We apologize if the system may not have been available during your booking. In order to properly answer your question, we would need more information including which platform you were using (website or VIA Rail app), the route you were trying to reserve and the day and time that you experienced connection issues. We encourage you to contact [Customer Service](#) with this information so that we can more accurately respond.

However, we can confirm that our reservation systems, both on our website and through our mobile app, were functioning at almost 100% for all of 2017. There were a few brief instances when the reservation system was down due to overwhelming demand and/or system maintenance. We expect the system to run well moving forward. In the meantime, you can always make your reservations at any time through [Customer Service](#).

21. Regarding special Tuesday offers, is there not an easier way of working with the system? i.e., if two people want to go, and also if they want to return the same day or another day.

Our current reservation system does allow you to search for two tickets during the Discount Tuesday promotion period. If there are two seats available on the desired train at the discounted price, you will be able to make the reservation for two. However, if there are less than two tickets available on the desired train, tickets in the next available price range will be offered.

22. Why does the Train-Alert Service that sends status information by e-mail or text message not work for trains 1 and 2?

Due to various external conditions beyond our control, we are not able to accurately predict the arrival times of Trains 1 and 2, therefore this option is not available. We are currently working on a different approach to convey accuracy. By collaborating with the infrastructure (railway) owner and improving our system we hope to offer train alerts for those trains in the near future.

- 23. I noticed that the cabin for two or Prestige cabin for two [on the *Canadian*] is sold out most of the time (for 2018). Can you make easier for retired travellers to know when those cabins become available (regular and discount cabins for two including dates)?**

Thank you for your interest in travelling with us on the *Canadian*. In fact, these services are quite popular and are available in limited quantities. The only way to know if the cabin is available is by checking online or by calling [Customer Service](#). Booking as far in advance as possible is recommended for this route and these cabins.

- 24. Why are the websites not updated or removed when outdated in a timely manner?**

While we try to maintain the most accurate and latest info available on our website, given the volume of information found on our site, it is possible that some pages will take longer to update. We apologize for the inconvenience. Should you have any questions regarding the information found online, please do not hesitate to contact [Customer Service](#).

- 25. We only recently found out that it is possible for seniors to request travel assistance for boarding and carrying luggage. Could this assistance be better publicized?**

Thank you for your input. Yes, the visibility of this service can be improved and we will work with the appropriate department on this request.

ENVIRONMENT & SAFETY

- 1. Have you ever considered calculating and graphing the carbon footprint reduction aggregated for all passengers? Calculate the carbon cost of each km in a car and for the train. Let individuals keep track of their own personal contribution and collective contribution to the environment.**

In fact, we have a [comparison tool](#) available for the public on our website. It compares the train to other means of transportation through various factors including travel time and GHG emissions measured in kg of carbon dioxide equivalent per seat for various routes. While this information is static per available seat, it provides a good basis for travellers to make an educated choice between road, rail and air.

We are upgrading the technology of our reservation system, and have developed a GHG calculator to provide more accurate information on the environmental footprint of using VIA Rail vs other modes of transportation. The calculator, while not yet available for the public, is being used internally to calculate GHG emissions per passenger-km for all origin-destination routes and can also calculate the per person carbon emissions for every potential passenger on every route in the Quebec city – Windsor corridor. This tool will be integrated into our new reservation system and on our website.

- 2. On November 30, 2015 VIA Rail made an international Union of Railways pledge to, among other commitments, reduce VIA Rail's specific energy consumption and CO₂ emission. What progress can you report in the 30 months since your pledge?**

The results, along with our other sustainable mobility efforts can be read in our most recent [Sustainable Mobility report](#), available on our website.

- 3. While I'm aware of VIA Rail's recycling program, I'm wondering if any thought is being given to developing and implementing a composting program for food waste.**

Yes, a composting program is being considered for our new fleet renewal program. Composting already exists in some of our facilities and we are looking at opportunities to expand the program.

- 4. The question I have is why is Via Rail so slow to adopt heart defibrillator machines on all of its coaches especially on the *Canadian*?**

Automated external defibrillators are located on all VIA Rail trains as well as in key stations and work locations. We also have an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Program, whose aim is to increase the rate of survival of people who have signs of sudden cardiac arrest. All AED responders are trained in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation as well as in the use of automated external defibrillators.