

Final Capstone Paper

Integrated Travel

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## **Introduction**

Integrated Travel is a Canadian-based not-for-profit organization that advocates for the needs of rail passengers, prioritizing regional concerns over provincial and international boundaries. Our project focuses on conducting a comprehensive passenger rail analysis to better understand what would entice people to take the train versus other modes of travel, what their expectations are, and how those expectations align with the current reality of rail travel.

The purpose of this document is to describe what other organizations have done to address similar needs and to present several alternative solutions or recommendations, along with evidence-based justification. This is our final project with recommendations to Integrated Travel as a demonstration of our competencies of our MBA program.

## **Project Objective**

The objective of this project is to focus on conducting a comprehensive passenger rail analysis to better understand why people choose to take the train, what their expectations are, and how those expectations align with the current reality of rail travel. The project will include a Cost-Benefit Analysis comparing commuter trains and long-range trains to evaluate the financial and operational feasibility of various service options.

The analysis will also assess station options, such as traditional brick-and-mortar locations versus vending machine models, and onboard train options, including amenities like a trolley cart, bar or restaurant, and coffee shop services. The findings will provide data-driven recommendations to help improve passenger satisfaction, enhance service quality, and ensure financial sustainability for future rail development initiatives.

## **Other Organizations' Solutions**

Many other rail organizations have offered various amenities for different riders and ridership experiences around the world. We have reviewed Amtrak, Via Rail, Rail Canada, Deutsche Bahn, Rocky Mountaineer, Eurostar and the Caledonian Sleeper, Transport for London, and Japan Railways' offerings as well as how the COVID-19 pandemic affected trolley services. Several major railway organizations and transportation authorities have implemented successful initiatives to enhance passenger satisfaction and revenue generation through improved food and beverage services, both at stations and onboard trains. These examples provide valuable insight into effective models that balance convenience, quality, and operational feasibility core objectives of this project.

Based in the United States, Amtrak (2025) offers several amenities and services for its riders including onboard dining, first class accommodations, seating options, bringing your

bicycle onboard, etc. Amtrak’s amenities vary by the price of the ticket but according to their Web site, include reading lights, outlets, and comfortable seating. They offer riders the option of first class, business class and private room accommodations, each of which comes with different additional benefits such as private beds, storage, and access to food and beverages.

Amtrak claims to offer “elevated travel experiences,” particularly with their Acela train, which travels from Boston to New Haven, to New York, to Philadelphia, to Wilmington, and Washington. The ride is 7 hours and there are multiple departures. Boasting about legroom and free Wi-Fi, along with power outlets. In terms of onboard dining, Amtrak offers Traditional Dining, Flexible Dining, Cafe, and Acela Dining. Depending on the length of the ride, there are complimentary meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner in the Dining Car. Additionally, they offer first class meal service, at one’s seat with “elevated beverage offerings.”

Around the world, many rail operators have found success in adding alcohol service to their onboard amenities. It’s become an effective way to enhance the passenger experience, attract new customers, and make train travel stand out compared to other forms of transportation. In Canada, for example, VIA Rail serves alcoholic beverages in its Business Class and long-distance routes, while Prestige Class passengers enjoy full bar service. Travelers in private sleeper cabins are also allowed to consume their own alcohol, if it complies with provincial liquor laws. This strategy appeals to comfort-seeking and leisure travelers who value a more premium experience. The results have been positive—VIA Rail reported a 6.6% increase in ridership and an 11.5% boost in revenue in 2024, suggesting that investments in food and beverage service can directly support customer satisfaction and overall growth (VIA Rail Canada, 2025).

Luxury train companies, such as Rocky Mountaineer, take this concept even further by making alcohol service a signature part of their travel experience. Their all-inclusive drinks and fine dining create a celebratory, social atmosphere that draws both local and international travelers. Reviews and travel publications often point to these features as major contributors to customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth marketing, showing that alcohol service can elevate the perceived value and enjoyment of a trip (Titan Travel, 2025). Similarly, in the United States, Brightline provides complimentary alcoholic beverages to Premium passengers both onboard and in its station lounges. This approach supports Brightline’s goal of positioning train travel as a modern, upscale alternative to driving or flying—an effort that has helped fuel its strong ridership and revenue growth (Brightline, n.d.).

In Europe, alcohol service is also a well-established part of rail hospitality. Eurostar and the Caledonian Sleeper both offer passengers access to bar cars or at-seat beverage service in premium cabins. Eurostar, for example, reached a record 19.5 million passengers in 2024, with its focus on comfort and convenience—including high-quality food and drinks—playing a key role in that success (Eurostar, 2025). The Caledonian Sleeper’s “Club Car” offers a similar social setting, though its success depends largely on maintaining consistent service and staffing levels.

Rail Canada has modernized its passenger experience by partnering with well-known Canadian food brands to provide locally sourced and sustainable meal options. This initiative supports national economic goals while enhancing customer satisfaction through quality and freshness. Rail Canada catering improvements are also part of a broader passenger experience modernization plan that integrates digital ordering, streamlined food preparation, and partnerships with Canadian suppliers (Via Rail Canada, n.d.).

Feedback collected through passenger satisfaction surveys shows higher approval ratings for food service and perceived brand value, reinforcing the effectiveness of this localized partnership model. In the United Kingdom, the Railway Station Catering Market Study conducted by the Office of Rail and Road (2024) found that increased competition among food vendors in train stations such as Pret A Manger, Upper Crust, and Café Nero led to measurable improvements in both service quality and passenger satisfaction. This market diversification reduced vendor monopolies, encouraged innovation, and increased vendor performance metrics, resulting in higher revenue and a broader range of food options for passengers. The study concluded that station-based food service partnerships significantly contribute to passenger retention and overall travel satisfaction.

Deutsche Bahn in Germany has taken a different approach by focusing on onboard modernization. The company restructured its Intercity Express (ICE) onboard catering services by adopting compact galley kitchens, implementing digital pre-order and mobile payment systems, and collaborating with national food producers to streamline menu offerings (Deutsche Bahn AG, 2023). These changes reduced service times, increased operational efficiency, and improved customer satisfaction scores, demonstrating the benefits of integrating technology with traditional onboard hospitality.

Meanwhile, Japan Railways provides one of the most enduring and culturally integrated examples of rail catering success. Its ekiben (train bento box) system sold both in stations and onboard has become a signature part of Japanese rail travel, blending convenience, quality, and regional culinary identity. Each bento box reflects the local culture and ingredients of the train's route, generating emotional connection and customer loyalty while producing consistent revenue (Japan Railways Group, 2023). Additionally, Japan Railways strategic placement of convenience-style restaurants in major stations enhances passenger accessibility, making the rail experience both efficient and enjoyable.

These international models share several common factors that have contributed to their success: (1) strong brand partnerships that leverage local or recognizable food providers, (2) digital innovation in ordering and delivery processes, and (3) adaptive operational designs suited to either station or onboard environments. The consistent positive outcomes measured in customer satisfaction, repeat ridership, and financial performance demonstrate that food service innovation directly supports broader transportation goals.

As one would expect, the global pandemic affected rail services as well as all aspects of business during that time. During the COVID-19 pandemic, all on-board trolley services were removed from rail cars (McCarthaigh, 2023). According to McCarthaigh, the Irish rail company, Iarnród Eireann has investigated adding vending machines on rail cars as a way for passengers to be able to eat and drink during their rail commutes (McCarthaigh, 2023). The spokesperson from Iarnród Eireann stated that they had investigated many different alternatives such as bringing back trolley carts or catering services but had issues due to the increase of costs (McCarthaigh, 2023). According to McCarthaigh, the company stated they were not looking at bringing back full dining car facilities to more than a few routes and did not want to staff trolley carts themselves (McCarthaigh, 2023).

Overall, these examples show that alcohol bars and beverage programs tend to work best on long-distance or luxury trains, where relaxation and ambiance are major reasons people choose to travel by rail. Commuter rail systems, however, have had mixed results with alcohol service. In the United States, for instance, Metra in Chicago and the Long Island Railroad in New York once operated “bar cars” and platform bars, but both ended those programs due to cost, liability, and safety concerns (Axios Chicago, 2025; ABC7NY, 2018). Likewise, Transport for London banned alcohol across its entire network in 2008 to curb antisocial behavior (Transport for London, 2008). These examples highlight that while alcohol service can greatly enhance the experience for long-distance or leisure travelers, commuter rail systems face more challenges. A more practical approach for short-distance routes might be offering café-style beverage options rather than full bars. Ultimately, when managed responsibly and in compliance with local laws, onboard alcohol service can improve passenger satisfaction, strengthen a brand’s image, and help boost ridership on premium and long-distance trains.

### **Alternative Solutions**

The team considered several alternative solutions for Integrated Travel such as trolley carts, a bar, an onboard coffee options, and vending machines. Additionally, options for station offerings are presented as well. These alternatives are presented here for consideration.

Trolley carts “offer a convenient and efficient solution for delivering meals, snacks, and refreshments to customers in various settings” (GZ TKING LIMITED, 2023). Some benefits of having a trolley cart service on a train can include that the cart itself is usually lightweight and easily pushed through the train car (GZ TKING LIMITED, 2023). The trolley carts can have “compartments to maintain the temperature of hot or cold food items, preserving their quality during transit” (GZ TKING LIMITED, 2023). The convenience of having a trolley cart of rail passengers is also helpful as it can make the trip more enjoyable (GZ TKING LIMITED, 2023).

According to Global Growth Insights, trolley cart service has challenges as it needs to ensure uniformity and compliance with many different safety regulations when using trolley

carts to cross borders across both Europe and Asia (Global Growth Insights, 2025). When it comes to rules and regulations, “the trolleys must meet different size specifications, fire safety standards, and sanitary codes” which make having one trolley cart for all railways difficult (Global Growth Insights, 2025).

Another option for Integrated Travel to consider is a full-service bar. A full-service bar in a designated lounge car would create a relaxed, social atmosphere for travelers, similar to what Rocky Mountaineer and VIA Rail’s Prestige Class already offer. Passengers could enjoy beer, wine, or cocktails while taking in the scenery, which adds to the sense of comfort and exclusivity that long-distance travel often lacks. This option works well because it enhances the onboard experience and helps position the brand as a modern, customer-focused travel choice. Offering alcohol in a controlled, premium setting also reduces operational risks and aligns with provincial liquor regulations. Integrated Travel may always want to consider offering limited alcohol options in Business or First-Class only. Instead of a full bar, the company could take a more modest approach—offering complimentary beer or wine for Business Class passengers, like Brightline or Eurostar. This approach limits the logistical complexity of running a bar while still adding value for higher-paying riders. It’s a practical middle ground that gives passengers a touch of luxury without requiring major changes to train layouts or staffing. This strategy also encourages ticket upgrades, improving profit margins while maintaining a professional and safe onboard environment.

Another option for Integrated Travel to consider is to create a “pop-up” café bar for special events or weekend leisure routes. For commuter or regional routes where daily alcohol service might not make sense, the company could experiment with a pop-up café bar on select trains—especially those catering to weekend travelers heading to festivals, ski trips, or major city events. This flexible approach lets the company test demand without committing to permanent bar infrastructure. It also ties into marketing and tourism partnerships, potentially attracting new riders who view train travel as part of the experience, not just transportation. Each of these options is viable because they balance customer appeal with operational practicality. The key is matching the level of alcohol service to the type of route and target audience—keeping it premium, responsible, and aligning with the company’s broader goal of making train travel a comfortable and enjoyable alternative to driving or flying.

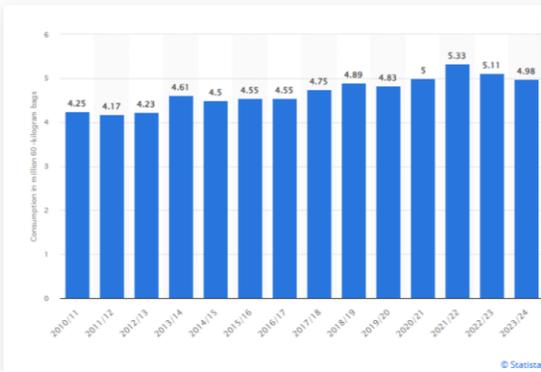
Considering the option of offering alcohol bar concepts at train stations, several train companies around the world have learned that offering alcohol service in or around train stations can make travel more enjoyable and upscale. For example, Brightline in Florida gives its premium passengers access to modern station lounges where they can enjoy complimentary beer and wine before boarding. It’s not just about the drinks—it’s about creating a comfortable, relaxing space that feels more like an airport lounge than a train terminal. Passengers can unwind, grab a quick snack, and start their trip on a positive note. This approach has helped Brightline stand out from other modes of transportation by making train travel feel more like a full experience rather than just a ride (Brightline, n.d.).

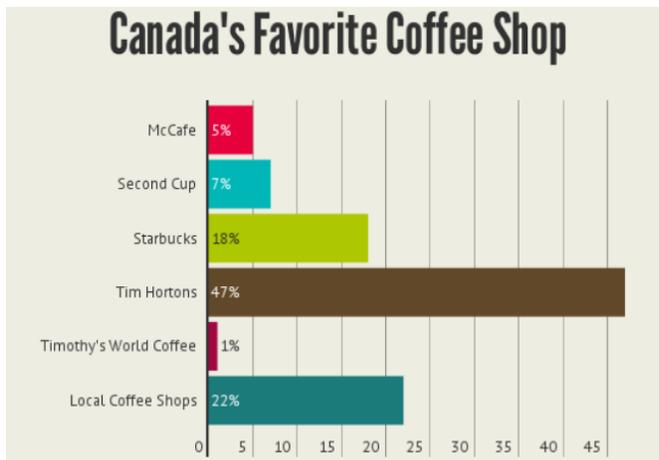
Eurostar has adopted a similar approach in Europe. Its Business Premier Lounges, especially at London’s St. Pancras International, offer self-serve wine and spirits to travelers heading across the Channel. The setup reinforces Eurostar’s image as a convenient, city-center alternative to flying, giving passengers a chance to relax and socialize before departure. The company’s investment in comfort and hospitality has paid off—Eurostar reported record ridership in 2024, showing that amenities like this can directly support customer satisfaction and loyalty (Eurostar, 2025). In Canada, large stations such as Toronto Union Station have incorporated licensed bars and restaurants right inside the terminal. These venues provide a safe and enjoyable space for travelers to have a drink before a long journey, while also helping generate additional revenue for the station (Union Station, n.d.).

On the other hand, not every rail system has found alcohol service easy to manage, especially in busy commuter environments. The Long Island Railroad (LIRR) in New York ended its long-standing “bar carts” on platforms in 2018 after decades of operation. The decision was based on safety concerns and the need to keep crowded platforms clear, though riders did appreciate the convenience while it lasted (ABC7NY, 2018). In London, Transport for London (TfL) went even further, banning alcohol entirely across its trains and stations in 2008 to curb antisocial behavior (Transport for London, 2008). These examples show that while alcohol service can be a great addition to long-range and leisure travel, it’s less practical for high-volume commuter systems that prioritize speed and safety over leisure.

An additional option for Integrated Travel is a coffee shop either on the track or the rail. According to Statista (2025), coffee is one of the most popular beverages in Canada and Canada’s coffee market ranks fifth in the world in highest coffee market revenue. It makes sense that coffee would be a staple of the offering of Integrated Travel. There are a number of popular coffee chains such as McCafe, Second Cup, Starbucks, Tim Horton’s, and Timothy’s World Coffee. There are also local shops. The pricing varies greatly from franchise costs being about \$100,000 to upwards to \$700,000, depending on the brand.

**Coffee consumption in Canada from 2010 to 2024**  
(in million 60-kilogram bags)





Lastly, Integrated Travel may want to consider mobile vending machines. According to Limitless Mobility Solutions Pvt. Ltd, “automated vending machines supplying snack foods and light beverages in every metro station would take the metro railways closer to perfection” (Limitless Mobility Solutions Pvt. Ltd, 2020). Vending machines do well when they are in a visible location and have high amounts of foot traffic (Vending Group, 2025). Some benefits of having vending machines in rail stations could include convenience, temporal accessibility, economic accessibility, social inclusion and nutritional impact (Bicom Vending, 2025).

According to Bicom Vending, some challenges that come with having a vending machine as a way to sell food and drink can include maintenance complexity, quality perception, menu limitations, installation costs, and regulations (Bicom Vending, 2025b). The cost of having a vending machine on site can be very expensive as some vending machines require specialists to fix and maintain the machines (Bicom Vending, 2025b). When it comes to the quality of the products, some consumers continue to question ‘automated food’ and it's unlikely to match restaurant quality (Bicom Vending, 2025b).

One study showed that having healthy and affordable options within vending machines made a huge difference. According to French, Hannan, Harnack, Mitchell, Toomey, & Gerlach, “greater availability and lower prices on targeted foods and beverage items from vending machines was associated with greater purchase of these items” (French, Hannan, Harnack, Mitchell, Toomey, & Gerlach, 2010). Within this study, healthy food was marked as 10% cheaper and was stocked 50% more than non-healthy food options (French, Hannan, Harnack, Mitchell, Toomey, & Gerlach, 2010). The study conducted by French, Hannan, Harnack, Mitchell, Toomey, & Gerlach, focused on settings that people are somewhat captive or constrained which rail travel could be considered.

When considering a vending machine as a possible option, the cost of operation needs to be considered. Many different “key factors such as machine type, price ranges, and purchase price play a significant role” (VendSoft, n.d.). When it comes to the size of a machine, larger

machines can hold more products but cost more to purchase (VendSoft, n.d.). The type of product that the vending machine sells also matters, such as a snack machine tends to be less expensive than a drink machine (VendSoft, n.d.). According to VendSoft, the average snack vending machine can cost between \$3000 to \$5000 for a new machine (VendSoft, n.d.). A drink vending machine can cost around \$4000 to \$6000 for a new machine (VendSoft, n.d.). A combination of both a snack and drink vending machine can cost around \$3000-\$5,500 (VendSoft, n.d.). Besides the cost of the machine, other costs like maintenance costs, repair costs, electricity and water expenses, and restocking costs need to be considered as well (VendSoft, n.d.).

According to a study completed by Bicom Vending train station vending machines have an average daily transaction of about \$150-\$200 per day, the average transaction value of \$1.70 and an estimated monthly revenue per vending machine of \$7,650-\$10,200 (Bicom Vending, 2025a). Some key financial indicators of having a vending machine would include the gross margin of more than 50%, the operating margin more than 25%, the break-even point less than 18 months and the return of investment of more than 20% (Bicom Vending, 2025a).

### **Recommendations**

Based on the analysis of passenger expectations, station and onboard amenities, and industry best practices, the following alternative solutions are recommended for enhancing food service in Canadian passenger rail. These options may be either quick service or sit-down and on the train, or at the station. They include restaurant offerings and alcohol bars. Both options are presented here with details regarding pricing, feasibility, and customer service experiences.

The station-based Quick-Serve Restaurant model involves locating a food and beverage service within a train station, providing convenient access for passengers, commuters, and station staff. This model benefits from high and predictable foot traffic, generating consistent revenue, and leverages station infrastructure such as running water, electricity, gas, and waste disposal to support full kitchen operations and a broader menu compared to onboard models.

A Harvey's franchise is particularly well-suited for this setting, as it offers a strong national brand, customizable flame-grilled burgers, and flexible franchise formats, including smaller footprints and digital kiosk ordering systems that streamline service for high-traffic locations. In addition to serving passengers in the station, a Harvey's Quick-Serve Restaurant can function as a central catering hub, preparing prepackaged meals for onboard delivery, eliminating the need for full onboard kitchens while enhancing passenger convenience.

Menu flexibility allows for hot meals, combo options, and regionally tailored offerings, catering to diverse tastes and travel needs. Strategic advantages include strong brand recognition, operational support from the franchisor, and digital ordering technology that reduces wait times and improves customer satisfaction.

Challenges remain, including competition from existing station vendors, lease and regulatory requirements, and operational costs such as rent, staffing, and utilities. Research supports the feasibility of this model: the Office of Rail and Road (UK, 2024) found that competitive station catering improves service quality and passenger satisfaction, Via Rail Canada (n.d.) demonstrates that brand partnerships enhance operational efficiency, and Japan Railways Group (2023) shows that station-based operations can combine direct sales with onboard catering to increase both satisfaction and revenue. Overall, a Harvey's Quick-Serve Restaurant in a train station represents a financially sustainable, operationally feasible, and passenger-focused solution for enhancing rail service amenities.

A full-service station-based Harvey's restaurant would leverage high foot traffic and available infrastructure, offering a broad menu, brand recognition, and digital ordering kiosks. This model allows for prepackaged meal preparation that can also cater onboard trains, reducing the need for complex onboard kitchens. A full-service station-based Harvey's restaurant would require an estimated Canadian Dollar \$450,000–\$600,000 in initial investment, including franchise fees, construction, kitchen equipment, and digital ordering kiosks. Annual operating costs are projected at Canadian Dollar \$350,000–\$500,000, which includes staffing, utilities, supplies, and waste management (Office of Rail and Road, 2024). Marketing expenditures are expected to remain minimal, at approximately Canadian Dollar \$20,000 annually, as Harvey's benefits from established national brand recognition. The estimated breakeven period is 2–3 years, supported by steady footfall and brand visibility. This model benefits from existing utilities at stations and low logistical complexity. However, risks include potential food waste and fluctuating revenue during off-peak hours.

Another consideration is an onboard Quick-Serve Service that would provide prepackaged meals, beverages, and snacks delivered directly to passengers' seats or via compact onboard kiosks. This enhances passenger convenience and can differentiate the service from competitors. The onboard model involves Canadian Dollar \$250,000–\$400,000 per train to retrofit compact galleys, refrigeration, and digital pre-order systems. Annual operating expenses average Canadian Dollar \$150,000–\$250,000 per train, including staff wages, supply logistics, and inventory management (Deutsche Bahn AG, 2023). Initial technology integration, such as mobile ordering systems and point-of-sale hardware, would cost approximately Canadian Dollar \$50,000.

With 500 passengers daily and an average purchase of \$10, estimated annual revenue is \$1.8–\$2.2 million per train. The breakeven period is approximately 4–5 years, longer than the station-based option. While this model enhances passenger convenience and service quality, it carries higher maintenance costs and faces regulatory challenges related to onboard food handling and storage.

Lastly, a hybrid approach combines a station-based Harvey's Quick-Serve Service with a dedicated onboard delivery service. Meals would be prepared and packaged at the station, then loaded onto trains for direct delivery to passengers. Onboard staff or automated service trolleys

would distribute items efficiently. This model maximizes the advantages of both platform and onboard solutions. It allows stations to utilize full kitchen infrastructure while providing the convenience and premium service experience associated with onboard catering. The hybrid model mirrors successful practices in Japan Railways’ *ekiben* system and aligns with market trends that emphasize convenience, quality, and operational efficiency (Japan Railways Group, 2023; UIC, 2024).

The hybrid model combines a full-service station-based Harvey’s with onboard delivery. Setup costs are approximately Canadian Dollar \$500,000 for the station facility and Canadian Dollar \$150,000–\$200,000 per train for onboard storage and service upgrades. Annual operating expenses are projected between Canadian Dollar \$450,000–\$600,000, reflecting shared labor, packaging, and logistical coordination (Japan Railways Group, 2023; Deutsche Bahn AG, 2023).

The hybrid model’s breakeven period is estimated at 2–3 years. It captures the operational efficiencies of station kitchens while extending convenience to onboard passengers. The model aligns with Japan Railways’ *ekiben* system, which integrates local sourcing, cultural branding, and high passenger satisfaction (Japan Railways Group, 2023).

While all three alternatives are viable, the hybrid platform-onboard model offers the most comprehensive benefits. It addresses passenger convenience, leverages station infrastructure, enhances service quality, and ensures financial sustainability. By centralizing food preparation at the station while extending service to onboard passengers, this approach balances operational feasibility with customer experience and brand differentiation.

**Summary Comparison**

Model	Setup Cost (CAD)	Annual Operating Cost (CAD)	Annual Revenue (Est.)	Breakeven Period	Key Strength
Station-Based QSR	450K–600K	350K–500K	6.5–8M	2–3 years	High foot traffic visibility
Onboard Quick-Serve	250K–400K/train	150K–250K/train	1.8–2.2M/train	4–5 years	Enhanced passenger convenience
Hybrid Model	500K + 150–200K/train	450K–600K	7.5–9M	2–3 years	Combines operational efficiency and reach

For this project, these findings offer critical direction. The proposed integration of a Harvey’s Quick-Serve Restaurant (QSR) within a Canadian train station mirrors proven international practices. Like the station vendors studied in the U.K., Harvey’s offers a strong national brand identity, menu customization, and digital kiosk systems that align with commuter needs. Similar to the Japanese bento box approach, a station-based Harvey’s could also serve as a central catering hub, preparing prepackaged meals for onboard distribution, thereby extending

its reach without the logistical challenges of full onboard kitchens. This model combines the strengths of station-based infrastructure with the service convenience associated with onboard catering, offering a scalable and financially sustainable solution for Canadian passenger rail operations.

Another recommendation for Integrated Travel is alcohol bars at train stations. The success of alcohol bars in train stations really depends on the type of travel experience being offered. For long-distance routes, a lounge-style bar can make the journey feel more premium and memorable. For commuter stations, a small café or licensed restaurant near the entrance may be a better fit—offering convenience without disrupting the fast pace of daily travel. The most effective approach is one that matches the passengers’ needs, supports responsible service, and fits the overall brand of integrated rail travel in Canada.

Here are a few realistic options the company could consider when deciding how to include an alcohol bar in a train station—both for commuter and long-range travelers. Each one offers a slightly different way to enhance the passenger experience while keeping safety, profitability, and practicality in mind.

*Create a full-service lounge bar for long-range travelers.* For passengers taking longer trips, a full-service bar inside the main station lounge would make waiting for their train more comfortable and enjoyable. It could serve beer, wine, and simple cocktails, along with light snacks. This type of setup works particularly well in larger hubs like Toronto or Vancouver, where travelers often arrive early or have layovers between routes. Offering an upscale bar experience not only generates extra revenue but also helps position the brand as a premium travel option—similar to an airport lounge. The key is to maintain a calm, comfortable atmosphere that encourages relaxation before a long journey.

*Add a small grab-and-go bar or café for commuter stations.* For busy commuter routes, a more casual “express” concept would make sense. Think of a quick-serve counter that sells pre-mixed cocktails, craft beer, or wine by the glass in clearly labeled, resealable cups. This setup caters to professionals catching an evening train home without slowing down station traffic. It keeps costs low, requires minimal staffing, and still offers a nice end-of-day perk for regular riders. Many commuter systems have tested similar models during evening rush hours with good success, especially when paired with food kiosks or coffee shops.

*Partner with local breweries or wineries to host rotating pop-up bars.* A rotating partnership model could showcase regional Canadian products—Ontario craft beers, British Columbia wines, or Quebec ciders—on a seasonal basis. This approach gives each station bar a sense of local identity while supporting small businesses and tourism. Pop-up bars also create buzz and keep the experience fresh for frequent travelers. Because these setups are temporary, they’re easier to manage from a licensing and logistics standpoint, and they allow the company to test which concepts draw the most interest.

*Alcohol Bar on a Long-Range Train.* Adding a bar to long-distance routes has clear potential. Travelers on routes like Toronto to Vancouver or Montreal to Halifax are onboard for several hours, so having a comfortable bar or lounge car gives them a chance to relax and socialize. It also makes the trip feel more like an experience rather than just a way to get from point A to point B. VIA Rail's Prestige Class and the luxury Rocky Mountaineer trains already use this concept successfully, offering complimentary alcoholic beverages and onboard dining that passengers consistently rate as a highlight of their trips (VIA Rail Canada, 2025; Titan Travel, 2025). Of course, it's not cheap to build or operate. Installing a bar means additional equipment, storage, staff training, and compliance with provincial liquor laws. The upfront cost could easily reach CAD \$150,000 to \$200,000 per train, plus ongoing expenses for supplies and staffing. Still, the long-term payoff can be strong, especially when the bar is positioned as part of a premium service tier that justifies higher ticket prices. In short, for long-range routes, a bar is not just a luxury, it's a proven way to enhance satisfaction and increase revenue.

*Alcohol Bar on a Commuter Train.* The idea of serving alcohol on commuter trains sounds interesting, but in reality, it's probably not worth the trouble. Commuter rides are short, crowded, and fast-paced. There's little time for passengers to order or enjoy a drink, and managing alcohol service during rush hours adds unnecessary safety and liability risks. Systems like Chicago's Metra and New York's Long Island Railroad tried bar cars in the past but eventually phased them out because of cleanup issues, maintenance costs, and safety concerns (ABC7NY, 2018). While a small profit could be made during evening commutes, the operational headaches would likely outweigh any financial gain. For commuter services, the focus should stay on speed, convenience, and reliability—not bar service.

*Alcohol Bar Inside a Train Station.* An alcohol bar inside the train station offers the best balance of comfort, safety, and profitability. It gives passengers a chance to enjoy a drink before departure or unwind after arrival, without the logistical challenges of serving alcohol on moving trains. Brightline's lounges in Florida and Eurostar's Business Premier Lounges in Europe have shown that station bars can enhance the travel experience and encourage more people to choose rail over air or car travel (Brightline, n.d.; Eurostar, 2025). The costs are moderate—roughly CAD \$250,000 to \$400,000 for setup, plus staff and licensing expenses—but the bar can serve both travelers and the public, creating a steady stream of revenue throughout the day. For large hubs like Toronto Union Station or Vancouver's Pacific Central, this kind of setup could become a signature feature that helps define the rail brand as modern and customer focused.

Another option is to have a phone or tablet application that allows passengers to order food and drinks from the comfort of their seats. Indian Railways has an application called eCatering IRCTC (Behera, 2025). eCatering IRCTC works with many different restaurants that have a wide range of food options at affordable prices (Behera, 2025). According to the website, some of the options include Domino's Pizza, Lunch Box, Behrouz depending on different stops that your train will visit (Behera, 2025). A German based railway, Deutsche has a service similar to the one in India but it only allows its first-class passengers to order and have food and

beverages delivered (ICE., n.d). According to the website, it's second-class passengers can look at the menu within the application but would need to walk to the food car to order food (ICE., n.d).

Overall, the best option for integrated travel in Canada would be to establish alcohol bars inside major train stations and on long-distance routes as well as explore eCatering for passengers on the train. These settings allow passengers to enjoy a more relaxed and enjoyable travel experience while keeping operations safe and manageable. By focusing on premium station lounges and well-managed onboard bars for longer trips, the company can elevate the perception of rail travel, appeal to a broader audience, and strengthen its position in Canada's growing transportation network. The commuter environment, on the other hand, simply isn't suited for alcohol service due to time, space, and safety constraints. Therefore, we recommend in-the-seat options that allow the flexibility of passengers to continue to work or relax and stay seated while their order is prepared and delivered to them.

## **Legal, Ethical, Policy, Societal, and Global Implications**

The recommendations developed for Integrated Travel involve strategic changes that intersect with a wide range of legal, ethical, policy, societal, and global considerations. These implications must be thoughtfully evaluated to ensure that all proposed solutions are not only effective but also responsible, sustainable, and aligned with regulatory requirements and public expectations.

### *Legal Implications*

Any changes to onboard dining services, station operations, or customer offerings must adhere to established laws and regulatory frameworks. This includes compliance with transportation and rail-industry regulations governing food service, alcohol distribution, passenger safety, and equipment standards. Health codes and sanitation guidelines must be followed rigorously when offering food and beverage options, whether prepared onboard or delivered from station partners. Labor laws also play a role, as adjustments to staffing, training, or service delivery models must comply with federal and state employment standards. In addition, the company must consider liability risks associated with alcohol service, customer injuries, or operational disruptions, necessitating thorough risk assessments and legal review.

### *Ethical Implications*

Ethical considerations focus on fairness, transparency, safety, and the treatment of customers and employees. Integrated Travel must ensure equal access to services across all socioeconomic groups and avoid introducing amenities that disproportionately benefit certain riders while restricting others. Ethical service delivery requires transparency in pricing, communication about service limitations, and the protection of customer data if new digital

ordering or payment systems are implemented. Additionally, staff must be equipped with proper training to deliver services safely and respectfully, particularly when handling sensitive responsibilities such as alcohol service or emergency situations. Ethical stewardship also involves minimizing environmental impact and responsibly sourcing goods and materials.

### *Policy Implications*

Recommendations must align with internal organizational policies as well as regional and national transportation policies. Expanding or modifying services may require new internal standard operating procedures, updates to employee training programs, or revisions to customer service policies. Externally, Integrated Travel must stay aligned with transportation authority regulations, local zoning laws (for station partnerships), and public health policies. Policy alignment also extends to sustainability initiatives, including waste reduction policies, energy-efficient operations, and emissions standards. These policy considerations ensure that the proposed improvements are operationally feasible and remain within the permissible boundaries of the transportation sector.

### *Societal Implications*

Enhancements to the travel experience can reshape public expectations of rail services and potentially shift regional travel behaviors. Introducing higher-quality food, beverage, or convenience options may attract new ridership segments, stimulate local economic development, and strengthen community perceptions of public transportation. However, the organization must also consider potential unintended consequences, such as increased congestion at stations, the need for additional security, or disparities between commuter and long-distance riders. Societal considerations include ensuring accessibility for individuals with disabilities, maintaining affordability, and avoiding actions that could reduce trust or satisfaction among current riders. Community feedback and stakeholder engagement may be beneficial to understand broader social impacts.

### *Global Implications*

In a transportation environment increasingly influenced by global standards and sustainability targets, Integrated Travel must evaluate how its recommendations align with international best practices. Many global rail systems emphasize low-emission operations, energy-efficient technologies, and reduced waste in onboard services, for example, minimizing single-use plastics or prioritizing recyclable packaging. Global implications also include competitive positioning, as travelers often compare domestic travel experiences with international ones. Aligning service improvements with global mobility trends helps maintain competitiveness and demonstrates a commitment to responsible and modern transportation practices. Additionally, cross-border considerations, such as potential partnerships with multinational vendors or supply chains, require attention to import/export regulations, trade standards, and environmental criteria.

## Conclusion

Integrated Travel is a Canadian-based not-for-profit organization that advocates for the needs of rail passengers, prioritizing regional concerns over provincial and international boundaries. This project focused on conducting a comprehensive passenger rail analysis to better understand what would entice people to take the train versus other modes of travel, what their expectations are, and how those expectations align with the current reality of rail travel.

We have provided a number of recommendations for both train station services as well as rail services which align with different traveler needs and station environments. Long-range passengers value comfort and time to unwind, while commuters want convenience and quick service. By tailoring the alcohol service model to each audience, the company can enhance customer satisfaction, increase non-fare revenue, and strengthen the appeal of integrated rail travel across Canada. As Canada looks to modernize and expand its rail network, offering an alcohol bar could be a simple but meaningful way to improve the overall passenger experience. Whether it's a quick drink before a commuter ride or a glass of wine during a long scenic journey, alcohol service adds a touch of comfort and hospitality that other transportation options can't always match. The question, though, is where this kind of amenity will make the most sense—and whether the benefits outweigh the costs. A future cohort should explore in more detail in-seat options as a way to thoroughly provide Integrated Travel with information to help determine its best course of action.

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