

AMTRAK FOOD AND BEVERAGE WORKING GROUP

Report to Congress

May 11, 2023



TABLE OF CONTENT

OVERVIEW	4
Scope of Work.....	4
Members:	4
Background.....	7
Data Collection Process	9
Current Situation	10
The Opportunity	14
SYSTEM-WIDE:	17
Enhance Customer F&B Experience.....	17
Establish a comprehensive Food & Beverage experience	22
Food Safety Compliance via Clear and Complete Ingredient Listing.....	26
Install and Operate Satellite Wi-Fi on All Amtrak Trains	28
Ongoing Oversight.....	31
Retrofit Existing Cars and Maintain Fleet.....	34
Align Amtrak and Aramark staff roles.....	37
Waste Control and Recycling	41
Define Vision / Strategy for all 3 service lines	44
Align Amtrak's onboard service culture.....	47
Establish a rapid cycle process.....	60
Upgrade OBS employee training.....	62
Celebrate the wins.....	65
Long-Distance: Open Dining Car to all passengers.....	67
Increase revenue while meeting needs	69
State-Supported:Localize product on boarding	72
Introduction and Overview	72
Expand Quality Control efforts	77
NEC/Acela:Revitalize Acela	81
Creation of a Modernized Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee.....	86
Amtrak food and beverage advisory Committee.....	89
SECTION 2	90
Longer Term Recommendation for F&B Planning	90
Future of Passenger Rail in America	90
Amtrak's Corridor Vision.....	93
Implications of Megaregions and Future Technologies.....	93
State Sponsored Expansion	94
Commissary rethink.....	94
Future Technologies	94
Fully autonomous "mini mart" style markets (no attendants required).....	94
Order from seat technology.....	95
Delivery to seat service.	95
Preordering food as part of initial reservation process.	95
Cashless Operations.....	96
Robotic Food and Beverage delivery.	96

APPENDIX.....	97
Glossary of Terms, Abbreviations, and Acronyms.....	97
FBWG One Pager	98

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 - Score Card Example of State Supported Routes.....	78
Table 2 - First Class Menu Ratings	82
Table 3 - Acela First Class menu Ratings	82
Table 4 - Benefits from Corridor Development	92

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 - Cycle of Pressures.....	8
Figure 2 - 2019-2022 Comparison by Category	10
Figure 3 - LD Traditional Dining	11
Figure 4 - Flex Dining.....	11
Figure 5 - Collaborative Culture	16
Figure 6 - Cafe Car.....	17
Figure 7 - Menu Performance	18
Figure 8 - Tools & Equipment Performance	19
Figure 9 - Satellite Importance.....	29
Figure 10 - Car Types.....	34
Figure 11 - Tools & Equipment Performance.....	35
Figure 12 - Example: Long Distance F&B Strategy.....	46
Figure 13 - Training Performance	49
Figure 14 - Communication Performance	50
Figure 15 - Tools & Equipment Performance.....	51
Figure 16 - Onboard Accommodations Performance	52
Figure 17 - Menu Items Performance	52
Figure 18 - Dollar Benefit Goal Chart	54
Figure 19 - Coast Starlight Start-up map.....	55
Figure 20 - Service Profit Cycle.....	56
Figure 21 - Megaregions	91
Figure 22 - Amtrak's Corridor Vision.....	93



AMTRAK FOOD AND BEVERAGE WORKING GROUP REPORT TO CONGRESS

Prepared For: Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation of the Senate and Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives in accordance with the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (Public Law No.117-58, § 24321, 135 STAT. 707 [Nov 15, 2021]) Section 24321.

Submitted by: The Food and Beverage Working Group (FBWG)

Final Report

May 11, 2023



OVERVIEW

SCOPE OF WORK

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and Response To Congress

ESTABLISHMENT - Not later than 180 days after enactment of the Passenger Rail Expansion and Rail Safety Act of 2021, Amtrak shall establish a working group to provide recommendations to improve Amtrak's onboard food and beverage service.

MEMBERSHIP - The working group shall consist of individuals representing:

- Amtrak,
- Labor organizations representing Amtrak employees who prepare or provide on-board food and beverage service,
- Nonprofit organizations representing Amtrak passengers, and
- States that are providing funding for State-supported routes.

MEMBERS:

Madison Butler – Communications Manager, Rail Passengers Association

Kirk Fredrickson - Passenger Rail Services Manager, Washington State DOT

Fred Gazzolo – VP of Product Development and Customer Analytics, Amtrak

Alex George –Food & Beverage Strategy & Product Development, Amtrak

Haley Glynn - PR Marketing Manager, Virginia Passenger Rail Authority

Ken Homko – Lead Service Attendant, General Chair Unite-HERE, Amtrak

Wilson Johnson – Lead Service Attendant, Chairman TWU, Amtrak

Robert Jordan – VP Operations Customer Services, Amtrak

Priscilla Lupar – Executive Chef Southwest Division, Amtrak

Wayne Moses - Lead System Safety Specialist, Amtrak

William Wang – Executive Director, Young Professionals in Transportation Foundation

Melody Wooten Strich - ARASA Supervisor, ARASA Division Chair, Amtrak

REPORT - Not later than 1 year after the establishment of the working group pursuant to subsection (a), the working group shall submit a report to:

- Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate, and
- Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives
- Containing recommendations for improving Amtrak's food and beverage service, including:
 - Ways to improve the financial performance of Amtrak.
 - Ways to increase and retain ridership.
 - The different needs of passengers traveling on long distance routes, State supported routes, and the Northeast Corridor.
 - Amtrak passenger survey data about the food and beverages offered on Amtrak trains.
 - Ways to incorporate local food and beverage items on State-supported routes.
 - Any other issue that the working group determines to be appropriate.

IMPLEMENTATION - Not later than 180 days after the submission of the report pursuant to subsection (b), Amtrak shall submit a plan for implementing the recommendations of the working group including an explanation for any of the working group's recommendations it does not agree with and does not plan on implementing to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives.

SAVINGS CLAUSE - Amtrak shall ensure that no Amtrak employee who held a position on a long-distance or Northeast Corridor route as of the date of enactment of the Passenger Rail Expansion and Rail Safety Act of 2021, is involuntarily separated because of the development and implementation of the plan required under this section.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Congress directed the formation of the Food and Beverage Working Group (FBWG) in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (Public Law No.117-58, § 24321, 135 STAT. 707 [Nov 15, 2021]) to provide recommendations to improve Amtrak's onboard food and beverage service. including--

- ❖ ways to improve the financial performance of Amtrak.
- ❖ ways to increase and retain ridership.
- ❖ the differing needs of passengers traveling on long-distance routes, State supported routes, and the Northeast Corridor.
- ❖ Amtrak passenger survey data about the food and beverages offered on Amtrak trains.
- ❖ ways to incorporate local food and beverage items on State-supported routes.
- ❖ any other issue that the working group determines to be appropriate.

This Report fulfills the requirements of Section 24321 that not later than 1 year after the establishment of the working group pursuant to subsection (a), the working group shall submit a report



to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. The FBWG held its initial meeting on May 11, 2022 and is submitting its report as directed on May 11, 2023.

The Food & Beverage Working Group conducted most of its work in three sub-teams, a Current Situation Team, a Best Practices Team, and a Future Focus Team. The Current Situation Team focused on customer and employee experiences and identified opportunities for improvement through employee surveys and interviews. The team examined survey data from Amtrak's customer service index (CSI), Rail Passenger association surveys and a frontline survey of Amtrak's on board service employees conducted by the FBWG.

The Best Practices Team researched and documented best practices within Amtrak and other organizations, gathering data through internet research, published reports (e.g., Amtrak OIG and Congressional Records Service reports) and interviewing Amtrak employees, representatives of state supported Amtrak services, airlines, and rail services in other countries.

The Future Focus Team reviewed the Amtrak 2035 Vision and investigated emerging trends and innovations for F&B performance, including food technology innovations and satellite internet technology. In the course of their work, group members rode trains in all 3 service lines, visited Amtrak facilities (e.g., Commissaries, Stations, Crew Bases, and mechanical facilities), to observe work and interviewed customers and employees. All teams met frequently throughout the past year to conduct their research and develop recommendations.

The Food & Beverage Working Group (FBWG) found that railroads and airlines treat F&B as a cost of doing business, with no expectation of making a profit. The FBWG recommends allocating a percentage of revenue to F&B and planning accordingly to meet customer expectations and provide food and beverage service at a reasonable cost. The group also determined that, while continuous enhancement of the Food and Beverage items on board is important, delivering consistently good service is not achievable without first fixing the systems that are in play behind the scenes that impact the quality and availability of the Food and Beverage [services] on board.

The FBWG recommends Amtrak leaders make improvements in 3 major components of Amtrak's food and beverage (F&B) business, 1) Amtrak leadership needs to clearly define and communicate its F&B strategy and business model, 2) implement infrastructure improvements to support the food and beverage strategy, and 3) develop an employee engagement strategy that supports a culture of service excellence. By implementing the recommendations in these areas, Amtrak will be more effective in delivering services that satisfy the expectations of passengers on long distance, state supported and NEC service lines.

With the new leadership team in place and investments in hiring employees and upgrading equipment, the FBWG believes there is no better time for Amtrak to introduce improvements to

systems, methods, and customer service on board. The recommendations are achievable within 2-3 years and are critical to the success and longevity of the National Passenger Rail Network. The FBWG provides evidence and data to support their recommendations and calls for transparency and efficiency in their execution by Amtrak management.

REPORT ORGANIZATION

This report has two major sections.

Section 1 contains a set of recommendations to be implemented immediately and that directly address Congress' request for immediate action. The working group reviewed all available data and concluded there were 3 main areas of opportunity for recommendations:

- Enhancing customer experience,
- Introducing infrastructure enhancements to improve F&B (Food & Beverage) performance, and
- Adopting management practices to promote F&B excellence.

Each recommendation provides background information, the current state of the situation related to the recommendation, case studies and best practices, goals indicating the recommendations' success, suggested implementation steps, and a timeline for each project.

The sequence of recommendations in this section of the report is structured to address Amtrak's organization system-wide before focusing on specific service lines. This approach is intended to ensure that any overarching changes or improvements can be effectively implemented across the entire organization which will create a foundation for more targeted recommendations in each service line. Following the system-wide recommendations, the report moves on to address changes unique to each of the 3 service lines: first with Long Distance, then State-Supported, and NEC/Acela.

Section 2 contains a recommendation with a longer-term perspective and considerations for planning and expanding F&B services over the next 30 years. The Future Focus Team has a strong belief that Amtrak's future growth will occur in alignment with the growth of the nation's population. While this may seem out of scope for a report on Food and Beverage, the team believes that understanding future growth patterns can help Amtrak make better long-term decisions and preparations to continue to deliver excellence in Food and Beverage.

BACKGROUND

The network of the nation's airwaves, airways, highways, and railways is vital to driving the United States' economic success, and Amtrak is an essential asset in this interconnected system. Amtrak



provides a safe, reliable, and affordable mode of transportation for millions of Americans every year, serving more than 500 destinations across the country. It plays a crucial role in connecting rural and urban communities, making it possible for people to travel to work, school, medical facilities, vacations, and other important destinations.

Amtrak contributes to our economy by reducing the demands on airlines and highways, supporting lower transportation costs, and providing cheaper transportation alternatives for our citizens. Amtrak helps reduce the environmental impact and cost of transportation by providing an alternative to driving or flying. This is especially important in the era of climate change, as reducing carbon emissions is critical to protecting the planet and ensuring a sustainable future. Amtrak also plays an important role in reducing the United States' dependence on foreign oil by providing an alternative mode of transportation that is energy-efficient and sustainable.

As for the provisioning of healthy, fresh food and beverage services to Amtrak passengers, this is an important aspect of the overall experience of traveling by train. Many passengers choose Amtrak because of the convenience of having meals available during their journey. In addition, providing healthy and fresh food options helps promote healthy eating habits. By investing in Amtrak's food and beverage service, we can help connect Americans to each other and to important destinations while promoting sustainable and healthy travel.

Since its inception Amtrak has received inconsistent support and funding as Congress struggled to clearly define Amtrak's role and value in the Nations' transportation infrastructure strategy.

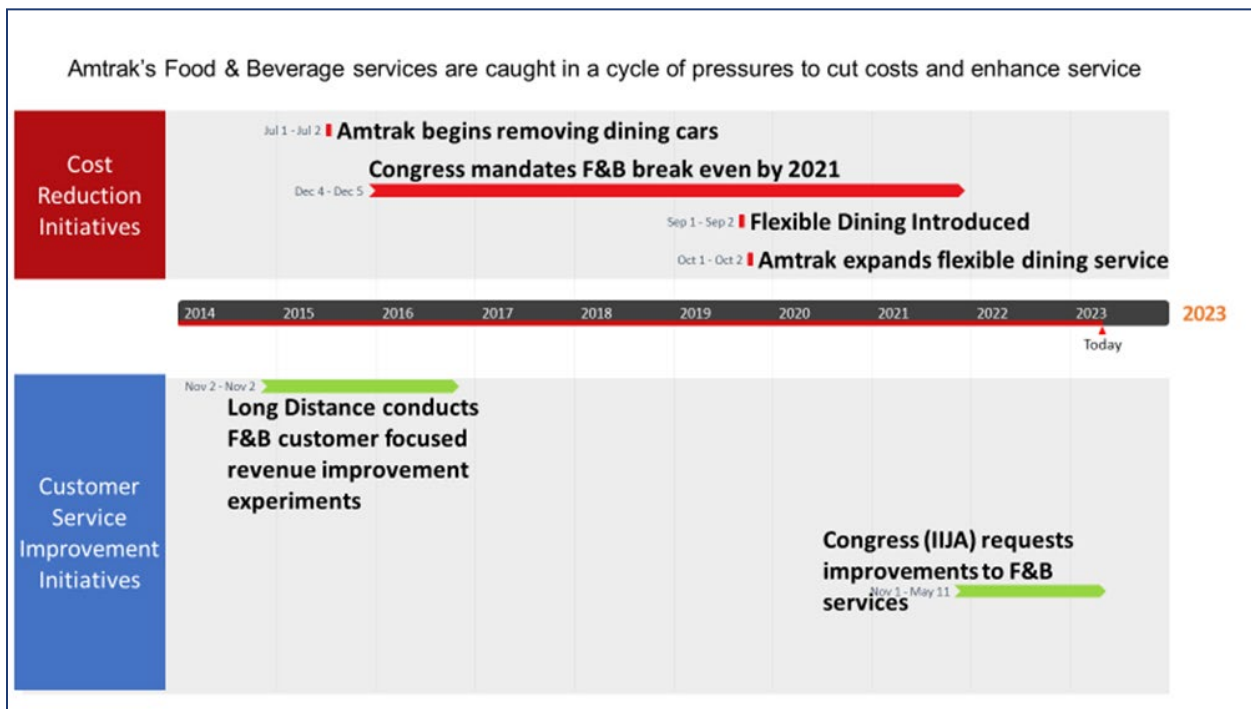


Figure 1 - Cycle of Pressures

The debate often turns to the topic of Food and Beverage (F&B) services on board and to what extent it should return a profit or if such a service should even be offered. The consequence of this fluctuating support is reflected in the series of initiatives that cycle every several years between dictates to reduce food and beverage costs (and show a profit) and demands to meet passengers' needs and expectations for quality restaurant type service.

Now, with the passing of the IIJA (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) directive, Congress is calling for recommendations to Amtrak's F&B service which will contribute to improving financial performance, ridership, and customer satisfaction. While investigating potential solutions to this perpetual challenge, members of the working group interviewed representatives of state-supported rail systems in the U.S., several other railroads from different countries, researched the airline F&B models, and studied the financial models from restaurants and other players in the hospitality industry.

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

The Food & Beverage Working Group distributed its Congressional assignment among 3 sub-teams: a Current Situation Team, a Best Practices Team, and a Future Focus Team. Members of the working group self-assigned to teams, with all members assigned to at least 2 sub-teams. The sub-teams met frequently throughout the past year to conduct their research and develop recommendations.

The Current Situation Team was tasked with researching customer experiences, employee experiences and identifying potential near-term improvement opportunities. The team interviewed employees and developed and deployed an employee survey to identify key themes associated with F&B services as well opportunities to improve F&B services and customer satisfaction.

The Best Practices Team sought to research and document best practices within Amtrak and in other similar organizations that might be adopted to improve F&B processes. The team conducted numerous interviews with subject matter experts within Amtrak, in addition to representatives of State-supported trains (Capitol Corridor, LOSSAN, Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority - Downeaster, Cascades and Virginia Rail, members of the State Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee(SAIPRC), members of the States for Passenger Rail Coalition (SPRC), and Executives of the Rail Passenger Association (RPA), and international rail companies (Via Rail, Deutsche Bahn, and China Rail).

The Future Focus Team reviewed the Amtrak 2035 Vision to forecast implications for F&B services and researched anticipated trends and innovations that could contribute to F&B performance. The team reviewed studies on the emerging megaregions in the United States and methods for calculating the economic benefits of route expansions. The team investigated the potential of various available food technology innovations for recommendations. The group also met with industry experts and providers of satellite internet technology to evaluate the potential application of satellite technology and its capacity for unlocking a set of IT-based opportunities for F&B to improve sales, control waste, and enhance customer experience.



CURRENT SITUATION

In order to make recommendations that would have the greatest impact on the task assigned, the Food and Beverage working group began its work by doing an in-depth study on the current state of F&B in Amtrak. The team also gathered data from constituent groups. They studied best practices inside of Amtrak and in other rail systems and looked at other industries and industry trends.

As the team began their research, Amtrak was in the midst of finding its way out of the pandemic. Ridership had not returned to pre-pandemic levels; the organization had lost thousands of employees and Amtrak had to make some difficult decisions to adjust to lower staffing levels and comply with safety related guidelines made necessary by Covid. The decision to remove full-service dining from the long distance routes and to reduce overall levels of Food and Beverage service across the network directly impacted Food and Beverage. While necessary, these decisions had a negative impact on Food and Beverage CSI scores.

Although rail travel is now up dramatically from the pandemic era, it has still not returned to its pre-pandemic levels.

Amtrak fiscal year 2019-2022 comparison by category										
Revenue (in millions)						Ridership (in thousands)				
	2022*	2021	2020	2019	+% 2022 vs 2019		2022	2021	2020	+% 2022 vs 2019
Long distance	\$607.9	\$330.7	\$308.2	\$494.6	23%		3943.4	2238.0	2689.5	-13%
State supported	\$382.1	\$209.3	\$281.7	\$534.9	-29%		10201.4	5519.9	8004.3	-34%
Northeast Corridor	\$907.9	\$342.9	\$651.7	\$1,320.0	-31%		9235.7	4408.8	6417.5	-26%
TOTAL	\$1,777.8	\$882.8	\$1,241.6	\$2,354.3	-24%		22930.5	12168.8	16841.3	-30%
Best revenue retention/gain in each category										
Auto Train	\$118.5	\$85.7	\$58.8	\$76.7	54%		279.0	236.0	163.6	18%
Empire South*	\$60.2	\$26.4	\$30.5	\$54.9	10%		1019.2	613.1	655.0	-16%
Northeast Regional	\$587.9	\$225.1	\$343.8	\$678.1	-13%		7091.4	3508.8	4486.8	-21%
Source: Amtrak										
*Amounts shown for FY 2022 include revenue from all trains operating within endpoints defined by the category, including trains sponsored by states that extend beyond those endpoints. Example: "Empire South" trains earned \$51.4 million, but that includes passengers buying New York-Albany/Rensselaer tickets on Empire West, Maple Leaf, and Ethan Allen trains. Thus, Northeast Corridor revenue includes Washington-Boston passengers on trains sponsored by North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. Amtrak does not calculate adjustments where that happens outside the Northeast or reallocate revenue from passengers on long-distance trains that run on the Northeast Corridor or state-sponsored corridors elsewhere.										

Figure 2 - 2019-2022 Comparison by Category

Amtrak also had to hire 3700 new employees to begin to make up the deficit in staff created by the pandemic. The company is still working to hire staff in all areas of the enterprise, most importantly to this report, to fill the void in OBS (On Board Services) as well as mechanical services. Revenue is increasing while capacity remains constrained on some routes.

Amtrak is in the process of returning full-service dining to long distance with very encouraging results. In June of 2021, full-service dining was returned to the California Zephyr, Coast Starlight, Empire

Builder, Southwest Chief and Sunset Limited routes. You can see from the table below that the CSI scores for Food and Beverage on these lines made an immediate and substantial improvement.

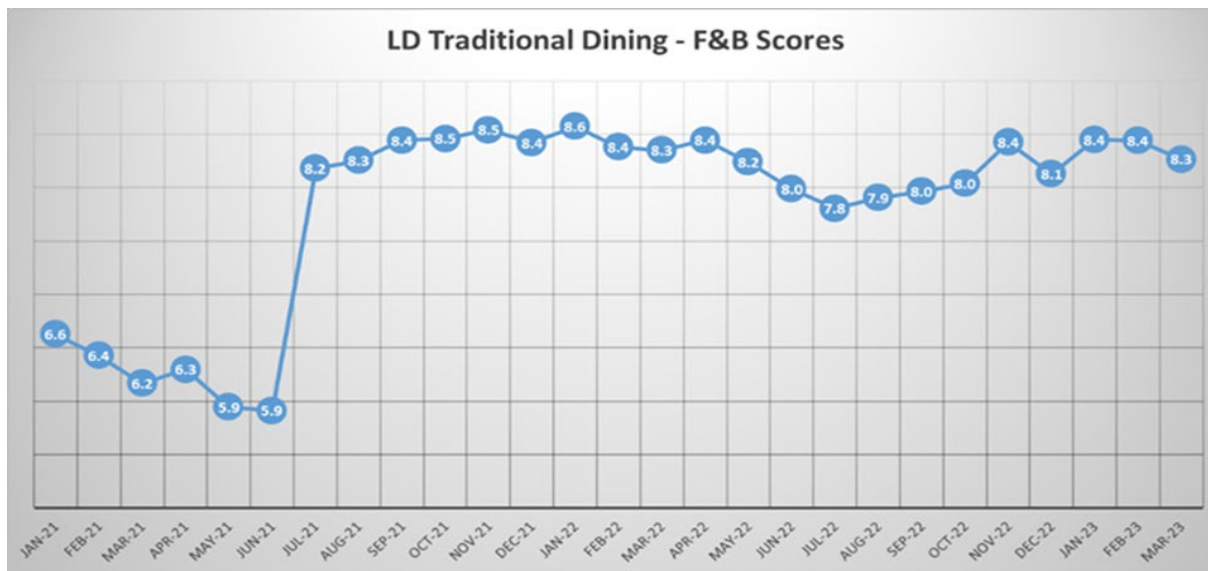


Figure 3 - LD Traditional Dining

Those routes that still have flex dining are experiencing consistently lower CSI scores than the routes where full service has been restored.

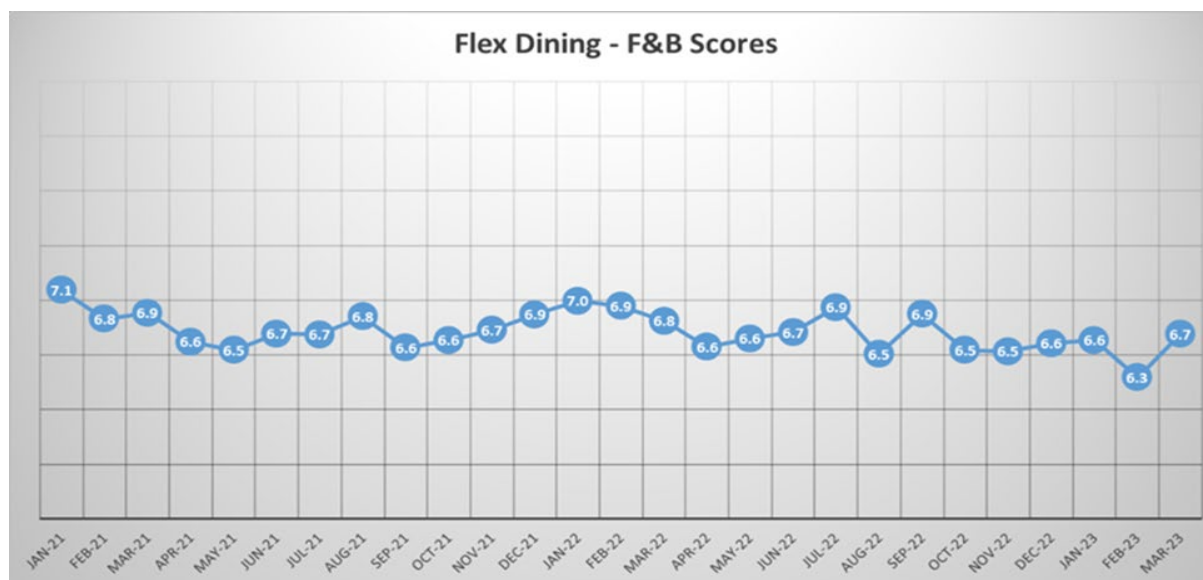


Figure 4 - Flex Dining



It seems clear that if Amtrak continues its current path of returning traditional dining to long distance routes that they will improve upon the critical measure of customer satisfaction on these routes. Amtrak has also begun to open up full-service dining to Coach passengers on an “as available” basis. This has been extremely successful in terms of creating additional revenue on board without the need for additional staff.

Despite the challenges associated with the pandemic, the Acela First class F&B scores maintained a very consistent level of reported customer satisfaction at or slightly above the level of satisfaction seen on board the long-distance trains that have re-introduced traditional dining. Amtrak is currently undertaking an effort to upgrade this service in an attempt to improve upon these numbers.

In addition to reviewing CSI data, the Food and Beverage Working Group initiated an employee survey in order to gain the perspective of front-line employees. The survey was completed by almost 230 employees from all 3 lines of service. Survey questions about employee support were limited to 5 areas. The team asked employees to rate: 1) training, 2) communications and information, 3) tools and equipment needed for work, 4) onboard and hotel accommodations for employees, 5) necessary menu items to serve customers.

The employee survey data provided a good look at the concerns that employees have with regard to their ability to provide the level of service to their customers that they believe is necessary. A detailed review of the survey data is available in the report section (Appendix: OBS Employee Survey).

The critical requests from employees responding to the survey were:

- **Provide us with equipment that works – Elevators, refrigerators, HVAC equipment etc.,**
- **Give us better, more consistent training – New employee training, customer service training, and selling skills training.**
- **Provide the right food at the right time that passengers want to eat and that the staff knows how to prepare and serve.**
- **Clarify roles and responsibilities between Amtrak and Aramark and hold Aramark accountable for their performance.**
- **Staff the trains appropriately.**

Based on a review of data from the Rail Passengers Association and State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC), the working group found similar issues. There were consistent requests for healthier food on board and for more opportunities for “sit down meals” when riding for more than 4 hours.

The FBWG also began looking for best practices to use for benchmarking and generating recommendations in service of our mission. The team interviewed key stakeholders on the following routes:

- Downeaster
- Capital Corridor
- Cascades
- Surfliner
- Deutsche Bahn

The team's interviews revealed some consistent themes across these organizations:

- Strong local leadership of the train that truly owned the performance and passenger experience.
- The ability to have strong national support and local autonomy and flexibility.
- Collaborative relationships with all constituencies e.g., the route, Aramark regional management.
- State leadership, mechanical services, local Amtrak food and beverage leadership.
- Clear performance metrics that leadership monitors to hold people accountable.
- A clear sense of pride in the unique nature of their region.

In brief, Amtrak is in the process of reestablishing its ridership and services to pre-Covid levels, and this includes improving its food and beverage offerings. Notwithstanding the pace of hiring, training, and deploying new staff, Amtrak is committed to providing high-quality food and beverage services that meet the expectations of its passengers. The reintroduction of traditional dining on long distance trains, the opening of long distance diners to coach passengers, and the upgrade of cafe menus with healthier and fresh food items have already received positive feedback from customers and are having a positive impact on revenue.



THE OPPORTUNITY

The FBWG discovered that both railroads and airlines treat F&B as a cost of doing business, with no expectation that it will turn a profit. Passengers expect to find options for dining when they ride the train. Cost-cutting experiments that seriously reduce quality and availability are a clear failure from a customer satisfaction perspective. Amtrak needs to be able to meet customer expectations and provide food and beverage service at a reasonable cost. The best model for this seems to be one that allocates a percentage of revenue to F&B and plans accordingly. This approach would enable the enterprise to plan for a specific cost and the team in F&B to execute that plan consistently.

Amtrak finds itself at a once-in-a-generation crossroads. They are hiring new employees at a scale not seen for decades. New leadership is encouraging rapid change and improvement and the IIJA is infusing money into the system to support upgrading tired train sets and equipment. The FBWG believes there is no better time to introduce improvement to systems and methods that have been in place for decades, introduce new training to improve customer service on board and to help supervisors and managers lead in a more engaging fashion. This, in conjunction with investments in new equipment, should position Amtrak to provide excellent food and service for years to come.

Within the following documentation there is evidence to support clear tangible changes and data to support these recommendations. The recommendations made by this Congressionally appointed group are achievable within five years so long as there is a commitment to follow up by the appropriate T&I subcommittees and they are executed with transparency and efficiency by Amtrak management. The FBWG believes the following recommendations to be mission critical to the continued success and longevity of our National Passenger Rail Network bringing this historic company into this century and beyond.

FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS UNDERPINNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The working group's report to Congress is based on 7 key assumptions that are crucial for understanding the recommendations because they provide the necessary context and foundation for the proposed strategies.

1. Developing and implementing revenue enhancement initiatives is the primary goal and focus of this report and the recommendations.
2. The Connect US plan represents a reasonably accurate plan of the future, indicating that Amtrak's network will continue to grow and serve as a vital economic engine for growth.
3. In order to realize the full potential of food and beverage excellence and customer service, Mechanical Services, On Board Services, Product Development and Food and Beverage must commit to work together toward the same objectives.
4. F&B services are not profitable enterprises in any passenger rail service, airline, or cruise line. F&B service is an amenity and expense that supports ticket sales, higher revenue, and is an investment in the bottom line.
5. Improving F&B performance and ridership is contingent on Amtrak leadership moving to a culture of commitment and ownership that directly engages and involves all employees.

6. Authorized funding secured via IIJA / BIL will be delivered and sub-allocated in a timely, transparent fashion.
7. Congress will schedule regular assessments of the execution of these recommendations. Responsible parties will revisit and readdress the work of FBWG as needed.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF SYSTEMWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

Early in the course of the work on this report it became clear to the team that there were recommendations that would be specific to lines of business, but that most of the recommendations would be system-wide recommendations that would improve service and quality across Long Distance, State Sponsored routes, and the Northeast Corridor. It was the consensus of the team that the continuous improvement of the Food and Beverage items on board is important but, that it is equally important to fix/optimize the systems that are in play behind the scenes and impact the quality and availability of the Food and Beverages on board.

These recommendations will fall into 3 categories:

- Enhance customer experience through F&B.
- Introduce infrastructure enhancements to improve F&B performance.
- Adopt management practices to promote F&B excellence.

The FBWG's experience tells us that implementing large scale change requires a clear vision and strategy, the support and engagement of the entire enterprise to achieve that strategy by collectively changing the systems and processes that will enable implementation of these strategies. The team's experience also tells us that most organizations fail to engage their workforce in change implementation and that in those cases expectations are not met.

EVEN THE BEST STRATEGY WILL FAIL IF THE CULTURE WON'T SUPPORT IT

If your culture doesn't support your plans to meet emerging business needs, it will hinder your ability to stay competitive. When employees are not engaged in the setting or implementation of a strategy there is no chance for the company to fully adopt the change.

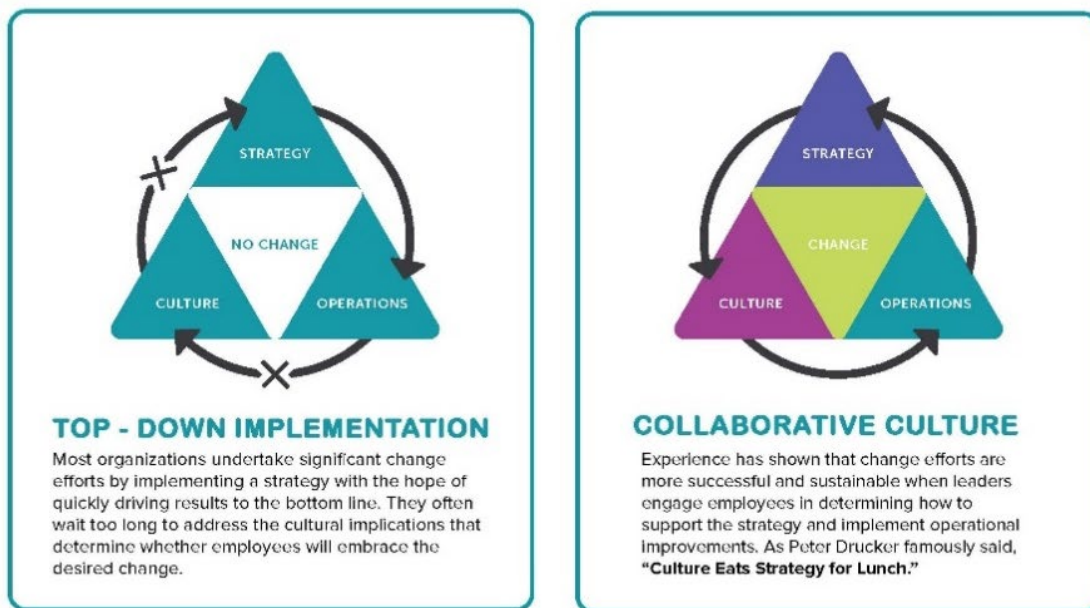


Figure 5 - Collaborative Culture

The following recommendations address the changes that the committee believes will have the most substantial impact on improving the quality of Food and Beverage on board as well as improving the level of customer experience and revenue enhancement.

"Our work has shown that neglecting to bring all affected parties into the planning process early affects the quality, cost and timeliness of projects" (OIG-SP-2022-008)"

SYSTEM-WIDE:

ENHANCE CUSTOMER F&B EXPERIENCE

RECOMMENDATION

Elevate Café Car service capability with a menu featuring healthy and fresh food offerings, updated equipment, and a crew-centric approach to F&B performance.

BACKGROUND

The Amtrak Café Car offers a convenient option for passengers to grab a quick snack or a sandwich and drinks, socialize with other passengers, or simply relax and enjoy the scenery during their journey. Yet, the café is an asset with much greater potential to meet the needs of passengers by providing more fulfilling, enjoyable food and beverage experiences.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Customers enjoy the convenience of the café car, but many have also voiced their dissatisfaction with the lack of fresh food items, limited vegetarian or vegan items, an oversaturation of unhealthy processed products, and shortages of popular items. While customers may be asking for healthier items, we note that the #1 selling menu item in Café cars is the hot dog. Customers (and Café attendants) have complained that some food items are not presented in an appealing way, which can be off-putting. Wait times for customers are another problem and source of frustration for customers and employees.

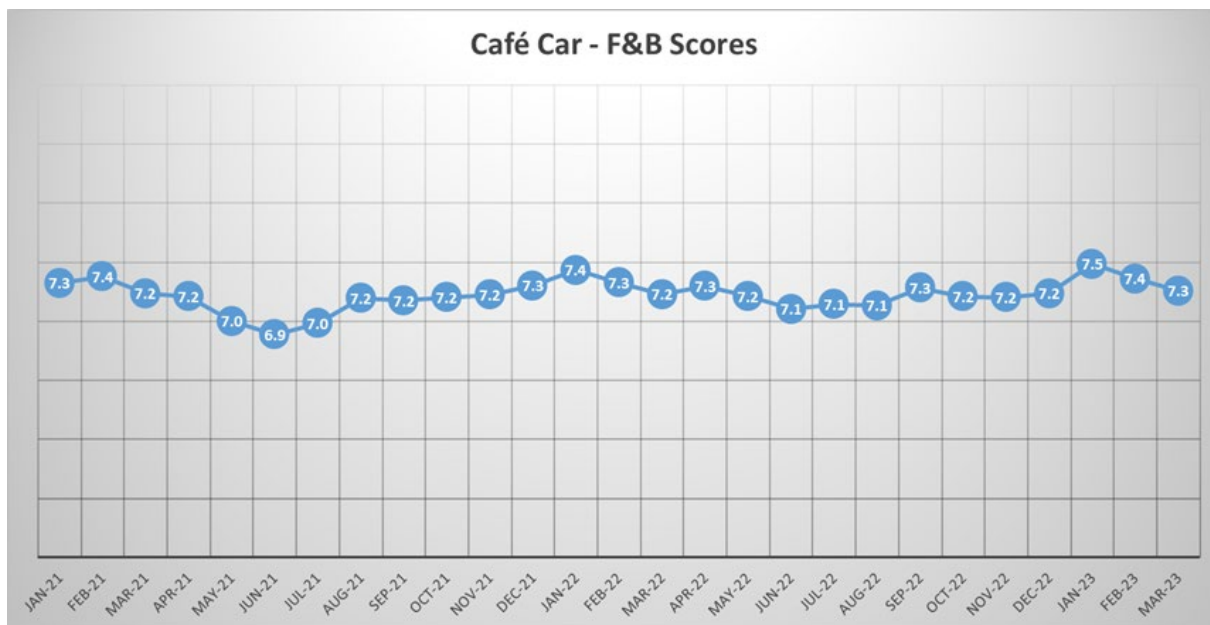


Figure 6 - Cafe Car



Amtrak employees are regularly hindered from providing consistently enhanced customer experiences in the Café due to equipment issues, provisioning problems, and limited offerings of the current menus. Recurring problems with the POS system slow down customer transactions. The LSAs (Lead Service Attendant) ability to serve items quickly is hampered by inconsistent setup, inventory shortages, and the limitations of having to microwave foods more ideally suited for preparation in TurboChef or convection ovens. The results create friction for staff and passengers.

In short, customers' complaints and extant operational challenges indicate Amtrak could quickly benefit from improving the quality and variety of food options available on its Cafe cars, as well as restructuring processes and upgrading equipment.

ANALYSIS / CASE STUDY

In addition to Amtrak's extensive Customer Service Index survey, data from several other sources highlight the current operation's problems and opportunities to enhance customers' experience. The Rail Passengers Association, SAIPRC, and Food and Beverage Working Group recently conducted surveys and interviews with customers, onboard service employees, and representatives from state-supported Amtrak routes that are summarized below. Survey and interview results from all data sources, including Amtrak, RPA, SAIPRC, States for Passenger Rail Coalition (SPRC), and the Food and Beverage Working Group survey are in general agreement with respect to the areas of concern and opportunities identified.

Rail Passengers Association Survey Data 2019-2022 provides evidence that the most frequent riders who support the continuation and expansion of Amtrak want better service.

91% of passengers surveyed reported that "sit-down table service" and "healthy meals that meet my dietary needs" were their top two priorities when riding for over 4+ hours.

In one-on-one meetings with 15 Café attendants onboard long distance routes, similar frustrations have been voiced despite the region of service.

The FBWG conducted an on-board employee survey (229 respondents) that revealed only 20% of employees believe they are supported with proper menu items to serve passengers.

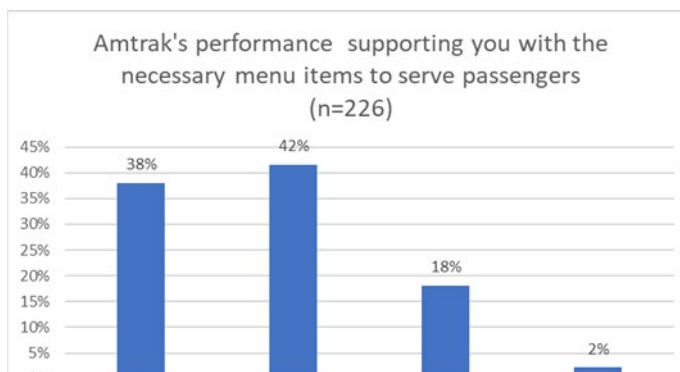


Figure 7 - Menu Performance

"Offer more fresh food like fruit and nuts, sandwiches and salads."

"The biggest requests I get on the train is asking for more vegan, vegetarian, or just healthier food in general on the train."

"Better ingredients, better supplies, and support. The majority of the food is very high in sodium and unhealthy, and the quality in

certain products feel very, very, cheap for the "Amtrak" experience."

76% of OBS (On Board Service) employees rated the availability of the right tools and equipment as Poor to Average.

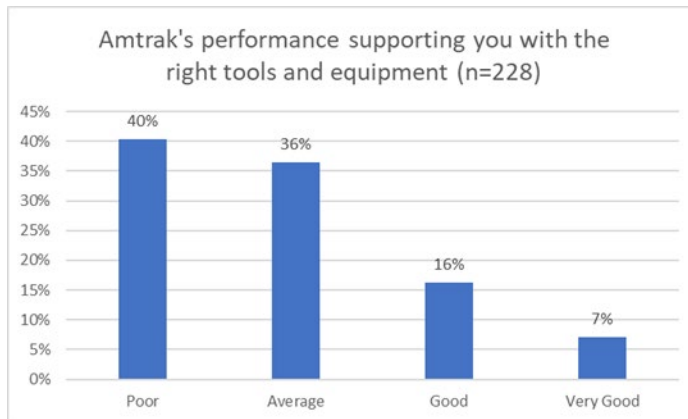


Figure 8 - Tools & Equipment Performance

"These old cafe cars constantly break down due to refrigeration issues. Just had mine go out and all the food was spoiled. Manager had to buy food from outside vendor to feed coaches."

"Make the POS (Point of Sale) system function properly and not crash/quit working on a such a consistent basis. It happens so often; it is a genuine surprise to have a trip when it works properly. It is a poorly designed system that slows things down dramatically under the best of

circumstances and creates total havoc when it doesn't work."

"Try to have better PARs (Periodic Automatic Replenishment) for the perishable items. Throwing out too many fresh sandwiches."

GOALS

- More healthy, fresh food, vegetarian, and vegan menu items available.
- Increased sales penetration as indicated by \$/passenger.
- Increased sales/labor hour.
- Improved customer experience as measured by Amtrak's Customer Satisfaction Index.
- Establish a crew/route-based performance management process for OBS crews to monitor and influence F&B sales and improve customer experience (as outlined below):
 - Crew members understand the business model/food service model of their route.
 - Crew members understand the goals, objectives, and metrics for their route/crew/job.
- Increased employee engagement as indicated on Amtrak Employee Engagement surveys.

IMPLEMENTATION

Initiate a process for enhancing customer experience and elevating café service should include the following actions:

1. **Redevelop menu items:** Based on the research and supplier options, Amtrak can continue to deploy more menu items that are healthier and include vegetarian and vegan options. They may also consider revamping existing menu items to make them more nutritious and appealing to customers. One suggestion, Food & Beverage Management should pilot



complete boxed meals available through the cafe car with a similar presentation and nutritional value as other modes of transit.

2. **Install/Repair equipment:** Ensure that required equipment is in place. Consider use of TurboChef ovens and other equipment that may improve the quality and broaden options of potential menu items.
3. **Test menu items:** Before rolling out the new menu items to all cafe cars, Amtrak should test them onboard/serve them in crew base meetings and gather employees' and customers' feedback to ensure that the items can be well-prepared and well-received.
4. **Train staff:** Once the new menu items have been finalized, Amtrak should provide staff with hands-on training and in realistic situations, to ensure they can prepare food items as planned and are knowledgeable about the new offerings and can answer customer questions about the ingredients and nutritional information.
5. **Promote the new menu/menu items:** Amtrak should promote the new menu items to customers through various marketing channels, such as onboard announcements and social media. They may also consider offering special promotions or discounts to encourage customers to try the new healthier options.

To support performance, Amtrak management and supervision should also institute a route/crew-based focus on driving F&B performance:

1. **Establish clear goals and objectives for routes/trains/crews:** Define and communicate the Food and Beverage service model and goals for each route to all employees working the route. Work with crew members to set goals and objectives. By articulating and setting measurable targets, the crew can better understand what is expected of them and work towards achieving those goals and objectives.
2. **Monitor progress and review performance in crew briefings:** Amtrak management should review performance metrics and KPIs with crew members and Cafe Attendants so they can identify opportunities to improve sales, resolve café service issues, and improve customer experience. Metrics can be used to monitor the crew's progress towards achieving their goals.
 - a. Hourly sales trends should also be factored into stock practices. Ex: Trains that leave in the morning and will not pass a commissary for restocking before noon the next day should have more breakfast food on board than a train that leaves in the afternoon and reaches its final stop before morning.
 - b. Food & Beverage Management should cycle or eliminate underperforming SKUs (Stock Keeping Units) with more frequent and attentive practices to stay competitive against other modes of transit that offer more intentional F&B service.
3. **Identify areas for improvement:** Metrics can help the crew identify areas where they can improve their performance. By analyzing trends and patterns in the data, the crew can pinpoint specific areas that require attention and take appropriate measures to address them.
4. **Increase accountability:** Performance metrics can help increase accountability within the crew. By setting clear targets and tracking progress, crew members are more likely to take

ownership of their work and hold themselves and each other accountable for meeting the crew's goals.

5. **Celebrate successes:** Metrics can also be used to celebrate successes and milestones. By recognizing and celebrating achievements, the crew can boost morale and motivation, which can ultimately lead to improved performance.

By adopting this process, Amtrak staff can increase sales and deliver more satisfying options to customers with a healthier menu of fresh food items, vegetarian and vegan options, appealing to a wider range of customers and promoting healthier eating habits.

TIMELINE

Amtrak should establish these practices no later than the end of the year and be prepared to report to Congress on business performance and customer and employee feedback.



ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE FOOD & BEVERAGE EXPERIENCE

Establish a comprehensive Food & Beverage experience across digital platforms, at stations, and onboard, providing customers with precise and timely information while enhancing the digital interface for employee use.

TERMS & ABBREVIATIONS

User experience (UX) - The entire interaction Amtrak Passengers/Customers have with the digital interface.

RECOMMENDATION

UX and IT development to support accurate and timely communications to passengers via web interface and mobile application usage.

BACKGROUND

The UX of Amtrak.com/Amtrak app has been a varied and conflicting experience for customers. Historically, there have been issues with ticketing, trip planning, and availability of information in a format that is easy to access and identify. A positive food and beverage UX requires a holistic positive overall UX experience of Amtrak's web and app interfaces.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Website Digital Experience

Currently, the menus available online are "sample menus" shared via template and accompanied by photos captured upon item release. Availability of items via dynamic menu is available solely on Downeaster, Acela, and Surfliner pilot programs but not actuated in the field.

The information currently provided to customers does not adequately cover available items in the cafe and dining cars for a specific route. There are menus available online, but this requires the customer to seek out information. There is no direct link to menus on the front page of the website.

Currently, the user must search the experience submenu, visit the onboard experience page, then the menu page, then select the menu type, look for their route, and view a sample menu that may or may not be inclusive of current onboard selections. Most menus available from this page were updated between 2019-2022. Regional sample menus are not inclusive of all regional routes.

Additionally in the experience submenu for a station, there is no station specific information on any food and beverage options at the station itself, which would provide customers with holistic food and beverage options in addition to onboard food and beverage options. A widespread practice for the

aviation industry is to have airport digital platforms to contain information of all food and beverage options that might be available at the airport itself.

Mobile App Digital Experience

Currently, the mobile application does not contain any easily identifiable option for customers to identify station specific food and beverage options nor does it allow for easy access to identify train food menus. There is no option to order food from customer seats or to identify food options available for customers in the train. The mobile application itself is currently focused primarily on booking tickets and ensuring customers have information as it relates to their journey.

Staff Digital Experience - LSA (Lead Service Attendant) App

Onboard staff do not currently have the means to provide updated information, item descriptions, or ingredients lists for all items served onboard. There is no financial or cultural incentive to upsell or engage in practices that would increase sales.

Comparative Analysis

Brightline

Brightline, a private passenger rail company in Florida, offers a well-designed digital experience for its customers. On the website, users can easily locate a "Food and Drinks" button that delivers comprehensive food and beverage information. Brightline introduces customers to "MRKT," an innovative grab-and-go option available at stations and onboard, as well as their unique "Mary Popup," an experiential food and beverage event at their Miami Station.

The Brightline mobile app prominently features a "Food & Drinks" button on the home page, mirroring the website version, and includes an additional button for information about the Brightline Station and its food and beverage options. Overall, Brightline provides a cohesive digital experience that prioritizes food & beverage offerings making them easily accessible and visible on both their website and mobile applications and allowing customers to effortlessly understand and explore their options.

Asian Passenger Rail Organizations

In several Asian countries with advanced rail infrastructure, the Food & Beverage experience is delivered in a comprehensive manner. China, a country heavily invested in its passenger rail industry, has developed an extensive and seamless F&B experience for its customers.

On numerous major city routes, passengers can order food and beverages onboard using QR codes at their seats. Alternatively, they can place orders at the dining cart. With a well-developed digital payment infrastructure, cash transactions are virtually non-existent. Recently, Chinese trains have begun piloting a system that allows passengers to order food through delivery apps which are then delivered to the dining carts at stations for customers to



pick up. This innovative approach is akin to using UberEats, Grubhub, or DoorDash while traveling from Boston to Washington DC, with food orders arriving at Penn Station and being delivered to the train's dining cart.

China's rail system also employs a sophisticated device for staff members, enabling rapid updates to food and beverage inventory for easy tracking. This system allows employees to monitor the availability of food, snacks, and beverages on trains and place orders for additional supplies if needed. These advancements, adopted by various public and private rail organizations worldwide, provide valuable best practices that Amtrak could consider implementing.

GOALS

- Review timeline for ideation - template - information hosted on site:
 - Articulate a clear process for menu updates to be approved and made public.
 - Find solutions to decreased lead time in digital menu updates.
- Website & App Update:
 - Ensure food and beverage information is front and center.
 - Develop an AI-powered chatbot to manage customer inquiries, integrating it with the website and mobile app.
 - Establish partnerships with third-party platforms such as Google Maps, Apple Wallet, and other ticketing services for seamless integration.
- In-App Dashboard with all trip information:
 - First iteration must include complete and updated menu information, trip details including timetables.
 - Clear timeline for pre-ordering.
 - Dynamic Online menu and ordering food and beverage at one's seat.
 - Identify timeline for in-app ordering and bandwidth for IT team.
 - Automated chat function for FAQs.
- Confirmation e-ticket email should contain information to incentivize on-board passenger spending:
 - Highlight menu for items available to purchase.
 - First time sign up receives coupon towards cafe car purchase.
- Update LSA handheld devices with:
 - Complete ingredient list and nutritional facts for all items served on board.
 - Sales description of items served to inform LSA of sales strategy ex: flavor profile, local sourcing.
- Metrics/KPI evidence that UX is friendly, easy to use, and survey responses reflect positive trends,
- Analyze how increased electronic support for LSAs can increase sales:
 - Review benefits of upselling and incentivize increased sales by LSAs.
- Increase investment in Amtrak IT infrastructure to ensure a modern world class digital interface,

- Amtrak IT / Executive Management can provide congressional report on the pipelining and hiring trajectory to increase IT department bandwidth by EOY 23.
- Build strategic partnerships with private sector organizations with sophisticated digital online interfaces for food & beverage purchases. (UberEats, DoorDash, Grubhub, Grab etc.).
- Employee training & receive updated information on changes to food and beverage inventory.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of this recommendation should be integrated into Amtrak IT's projects and dates for anticipated completion reported to congress within the required deadlines.



FOOD SAFETY COMPLIANCE VIA CLEAR AND COMPLETE INGREDIENT LISTING

RECOMMENDATION

In accordance with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and industry best practices, the total ingredient lists for all food and beverage served on-board must be made available to all passengers in advance and throughout their trip.

BACKGROUND

The working group has been informed of anecdotal experiences of allergic reactions on-board varying in intensity. Given the remote nature of many routes, there is an understood probability that first responders may not be able to reach the train in a timely manner in the event of a heightened, life-threatening reaction. To proactively reduce the possibility of such an incident, it is recommended that Amtrak provide full ingredients lists and nutritional information in advance.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Amtrak offers a short description of some of the items served on some routes. This information is not listed in a highly visible or in a convenient location on their website. The menu page is infrequently updated and for those with serious allergies, the lack of information regarding food allergies influences their decision to purchase food onboard as opposed to bringing their own food or purchasing food at the station. Some pre-packed cafe car items, served in their original packaging as provided by the vendor contain full ingredient lists. Traditional Dining meals and Flexible Dining options do not contain full ingredient lists, nutritional information, calorie count, or a list of common allergens. The staff on-board is not provided with a full ingredient list for their current offerings.

ANALYSIS / CASE STUDY

Madison Butler scheduled meetings with Kathryn Carroll, Esq. ADA compliance attorney, Anna Zivartz Director of Disability Mobility Initiative, and Kenneth Shiotani the Senior Staff Attorney of National Disability Rights Network to discuss various points of dissatisfaction between the ADA community and Amtrak as pertains to the working group. There was unanimous support for having full ingredient lists of all items aboard all trains.

Kathryn Carroll provided the following statement to support this recommendation:

Food sensitivity would be of concern to people with autism, Down syndrome, and conditions like IBS or Crohn's. Even though some people identify more as having a "chronic condition" than "disability," it all falls under a disability umbrella. For people who are blind or low vision like myself, it may be more able the convenience of perusing an ingredient list if we are looking for something vegetarian or vegan (I've done this), or satisfy some other requirement, and not having to get staff assistance. And I believe allergies can rise to the level of disability.

Madison Butler provided the following statement upon completion of the aforementioned meetings:

We have evidence to support the case that the exclusion of full ingredient list and nutritional facts for all items onboard is limiting to a multitude of passengers and that it has health and

safety impacts for all sorts of folks. I also want to make sure that ADA laws are complied with in regard to future Amtrak fleet construction, specifically construction of single level cafe and dining cars.

While I am an expert in the field of hospitality, I assume there are gaps in my knowledge surrounding food allergies and their connections to a compromised or impaired immune response, inflammation, allergic reaction, etc. After meeting with advocates who could review this section of our recommendations and advise language that is inclusive and reflective of current federal ADA law, the current risks and range of liability have become glaringly apparent.

GOALS

- Publish nutritional information online in a clear and easy to access fashion,
 - Update the Onboard Dining page of the Amtrak website to reflect all current offerings onboard, the full ingredient lists, nutritional information, calorie count for each item.
- Provide complete ingredients list and nutritional information in materials provided to attendants and dining car staff.
- Assure that all relevant staff are:
 - Informed of how to identify medical alert bracelets, signs of an allergic reaction, common allergens, cross-contamination risks factors.
 - and are supplied with the resources needed to consistently assure food safety.
- Allow passengers with extreme allergies to add a medical alert to their reservation during ticket purchase.
- Press Release and Social Media announcement of this information and its location on Amtrak's website.
- Prioritization of ADA accessibility and compliance in future iterations of all Amtrak concepts, products, consists, and designs.

IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of this recommendation is simple. Amtrak Food and Beverage Management provides full documentation to the IT team who uploads the text to the existing food facts page and reviews the page for interaction with ADA accessible devices. Once documentation is complete, IT notifies the PR and SM teams who publish external communications to inform passengers of this accommodation. Commercially pre-packaged items that currently list all ingredients would be exempt from this recommendation after being identified to the public as items that list the full ingredients on the manufacturer's packaging.

TIMELINE

Continuous implementation of all goals and vigilant updates as new products go into circulation will be revisited by F&B Management in accordance with product lifecycles. Vendor contracts should include the delivery of this information to Amtrak management between the product testing and bulk ordering phase moving forward.



INSTALL AND OPERATE SATELLITE WI-FI ON ALL AMTRAK TRAINS

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt satellite Wi-Fi service on Amtrak trains to improve the connectivity of passengers' personal communication devices on the train, provide more consistent and faster credit and debit card transactions in café cars, and support better communications between the trains and Amtrak's food and beverage commissaries for more reliable and accurate inventory management.

BACKGROUND

Wi-Fi connections on Amtrak trains are used by passengers with personal communication devices and by on-board staff for processing credit and debit card transactions in the café cars. Train Wi-Fi systems use cellular technology that rely on cellular towers placed near the rail lines, antennae located on the roofs of train cars, on-board signal processing devices provided by commercial carriers like Verizon and T-Mobile, and wiring and signal broadcasters mounted within the train cars. Wi-Fi service on Amtrak trains varies greatly, with good connections that transmit higher volumes of data rapidly in urban areas with multiple cellular towers, to weak or non-existent Wi-Fi connections in rural areas.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Wi-Fi connectivity is very inconsistent across the country and across individual train routes. This not only impacts the customer experience, but it can hobble Amtrak's recently installed Point-of-Sale system (POS) in the café cars and impact the speed and ease of purchasing food and beverage items on the trains. Amtrak's new POS relies on its own cellular connection that is independent from the cellular connections used by passengers, which means the system does not have to compete for signal bandwidth with hundreds of other users. Nevertheless, POS connectivity is still constrained in many areas due to the absence of a cellular connection.

AMTRAK CASE STUDY

When an Amtrak train is passing through an area with limited or non-existent cellular connectivity, the Amtrak Lead Service Attendant (LSA) in the café car can process a credit or debit card transaction and have that transaction stored or "cached" in the POS, until such time the train reaches an area where the cellular connectivity is more robust, and the transaction can be transmitted to the passenger's financial institution. However, if the debit or credit card transaction is rejected by the passenger's financial institution, the transaction is lost, or the LSA must leave the café car, find the passenger, and ask for another form of payment. This situation can result in lost revenue, embarrassment for the passenger, and growing lines in the food service car as hungry and thirsty passengers wait for the LSA to return.

AN EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

In recent years, several communication companies have moved into the world of satellite Wi-Fi communications, where geosynchronous and low-earth orbit satellites transmit data to and from rural businesses and residences, ships, aircraft, and trains around the world. The significant benefits of

satellite Wi-Fi include more consistent connectivity, and much greater volumes of data transfer at higher speeds than cellular transmissions.

In the United States, satellite Wi-Fi providers include HughesNet, Viasat, and Starlink. All three offer satellite subscription services that come with varying pricing that depends on the anticipated number of end-users. Satellite subscribers in the US transportation industry include American Airlines, JetBlue, Virgin America, United Airlines, Carnival Cruise Lines and Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines.

Amtrak has considered other cellular technologies to improve Wi-Fi connectivity on trains, including tapping fiber optic lines that run adjacent to railroads, and installing a new network of cellular towers in areas with weak or non-existent cellular connectivity. These options could be very expensive to install and potentially take a good amount of time to design, permit, construct, test, and commission for operations. Satellite Wi-Fi avoids all these lengthy and costly steps, as the satellites are already in orbit above the earth and can be accessed through a service contract.

Why is satellite internet so important?

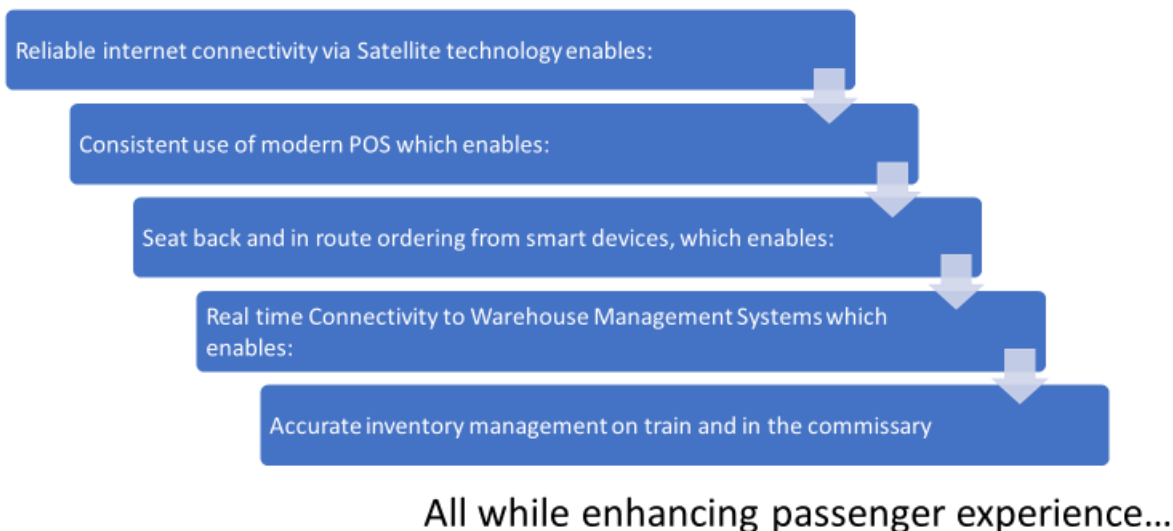


Figure 9 - Satellite Importance

GOALS

Below is a list of goals linked to the provision of satellite Wi-Fi on Amtrak trains across the county:

- Improve the passenger experience and system-wide CSI scores by providing significantly better Wi-Fi connectivity for passengers and faster and easier food and beverage purchasing transactions.



- Grow Amtrak's reputation for providing a "best-in-class" Wi-Fi service, thereby increasing ridership, ticket revenues, and food and beverage revenues.
- Eliminate food and beverage revenue losses due to poor POS connectivity.
- Improve the communications between on-board POS systems and Amtrak's food and beverage commissaries for more reliable and accurate inventory management.
- Develop, test, refine and offer at-seat ordering and purchasing of food and beverage products using satellite Wi-Fi technology.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Issue an RFI and RFP

To implement this recommendation, Amtrak should issue a Request for Information (RFI) to industry telecommunication providers and installation contractors to determine which satellite Wi-Fi providers and installation contractors would be willing to work with Amtrak to test and deploy this new system on Amtrak trains. After gauging the industry response, Amtrak should issue a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) that details Amtrak's expectations, specifications, and other requirements to satellite providers and installation contractors.

2. Select a satellite Wi-Fi vendor and installation contractor and initiate a pilot deployment on a long-distance route

Amtrak shall select a vendor and installation contractor and develop an aggressive project schedule for system deployment on a select long-distance route. Results from this pilot project can then inform a larger scale nationwide fleet re-configuration.

3. If needed, modify the existing Point of Sales system to enable use of the satellite connection

Amtrak's existing POS may need to be modified through hardware and/or software upgrades to use the new satellite Wi-Fi connections and enable real-time food and beverage inventory management between the trains and Amtrak commissaries as well as between the trains and mechanical services systems.

4. Work with Amtrak on how best to offer at-seat ordering with input from front-line staff

A strong and consistent Wi-Fi signal will support at-seat ordering by passengers who could use their personal communication devices to select and purchase food and beverage items for pick up from the café cars while the train is enroute. After the new satellite Wi-Fi system is installed, Amtrak should work with front-line staff and others to determine the most efficient way to offer this new customer amenity.

ONGOING OVERSIGHT

RECOMMENDATION

A Food and Beverage Advisory Committee (FBAC) similar to the one formed for this report shall be established and funded to monitor Amtrak's efforts toward implementing the IIJA Food and Beverage Working Group's recommendations. The FBAC shall also serve as a forum for information-sharing between states, regional rail authorities, Amtrak management, Amtrak onboard staff and labor, Rail Passengers Association staff members, and others with the goal of continuously improving food and beverage service across Amtrak's entire network.

BACKGROUND

When Congress mandated the formation of the IIJA Food and Beverage Working Group to provide recommendations to improve Amtrak's onboard food and beverage service, it represented the first time Amtrak management, Amtrak labor, Rail Passengers Association staff members, and states were called together to discuss this important component of Amtrak's operations. Through virtual and in-person meetings, site visits, data sharing, and interviews with a wide variety of organizations, the IIJA Food and Beverage Working Group was exposed to the complexities of providing high-quality food and beverage service on Amtrak trains. The Working Group also discovered that there is currently no single entity or information clearinghouse where stakeholder organizations effected by the delivery of Amtrak services can learn about and potentially influence Amtrak's policies and requirements for food and beverage service on long distance, state-supported, and Northeast Corridor (NEC) trains.

As mentioned in this report, Amtrak has established a new vision for passenger rail across the United States called *Amtrak Connects US*. Amtrak's vision calls for improvements to existing train routes, reinstated or new train routes, and up to 160 new communities served by Amtrak. With this expansion comes the need to educate more stakeholders and decision-makers on all aspects of Amtrak's operations, including food and beverage service. The establishment of an ongoing food and beverage advisory committee could prove to be a valuable resource for states and others who want to learn from those involved in delivering this unique type of food and beverage service. Focus areas could include how to brand a regional service through a food and beverage program, how to increase revenues and customer satisfaction, and how to get local and regional products placed on train menus.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

The national Rail Passengers Association, who is a member of this Working Group and authored the legislation that created the IIJA Food and Beverage Working Group, used to have an active role leading the Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee (ACAC). This committee had been working with Amtrak for over 20 years with the goal of improving Amtrak's service delivery across the country. When the COVID pandemic began in 2020, the ACAC was suspended and has not been revived by Amtrak.

The State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC), formed in 2015, has a Commercial Performance Working Group that occasionally discusses food and beverage service, but its primary focus is on advertising/marketing and revenue generation on state-supported routes. SAIPRC does not have any responsibilities associated with Amtrak's long distance trains or Amtrak's NEC service.



The only existing entity charged with examining food and beverage-related issues and opportunities for all of Amtrak's service lines is this IJJA Food and Beverage Working Group. Unfortunately, this Working Group's existence ends once its report is submitted to Congress in May 2023.

CASE STUDY

In 2023, the states of Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota will be launching a new Amtrak service called *Great River*. This new service connecting Chicago, Milwaukee, and the Twin Cities will be an extension of the Chicago-Milwaukee *Hiawatha* service and will operate on a portion of the route that carries Amtrak's long distance *Empire Builder*.

The *Hiawatha* currently does not offer any on-board food and beverage service. Public officials working for the three states have expressed interest in offering this amenity to passengers riding on the *Great River* intercity rail service, but they have been struggling to find resources that can guide them when navigating the start-up of an on-board food and beverage program.

The launching of the *Great River* service is representative of the issues and challenges that will be faced by many more states in the coming years as Amtrak moves to expand its network. These issues and challenges could be addressed by a working group designed to aid those in need of resources to launch a high-quality food and beverage service on new state-supported routes.

GOALS

- Provide ongoing oversight of Amtrak's implementation of the IJJA Food and Beverage Working Group's recommendations and issue an annual progress report to Congress for a five-year period starting in 2024.
- Develop a portfolio of food and beverage-related resources for states and other public entities that will be starting food and beverage programs as part of Amtrak's *Connects US* initiative.
- Serve as a forum for information sharing between Amtrak management, Amtrak labor, states, regional rail authorities, SAIPRC, Rail Passenger Association staff members, and others who are committed to continuously improving food and beverage service on Amtrak trains.

IMPLEMENTATION

Upon submittal of the IJJA Food and Beverage Working Group's Final Report in May 2023, Congress shall take the steps necessary to establish and fund an ongoing Food and Beverage Advisory Committee comprised of Amtrak management, the labor organizations representing Amtrak employees who prepare or provide on-board food and beverage service, Rail Passengers Association staff members, and states that are providing funds for state-supported Amtrak routes. This advisory group will conduct the mission and goals described in this recommendation.

The FBAC will establish subcommittees to achieve the goals of this recommendation. The subcommittees will report to the FBAC on a quarterly basis.

- **State-Supported-** SAIPRC will oversee the state-supported subcommittee within the Commercial Performance Working Group to help states investigate and evaluate local products and processes. The committee will meet with Amtrak on a quarterly basis to evaluate sales reports, best practices, and changes. The committee will help state partners establish route-level local food provision models.
- **Long Distance/NEC-** The FBAC will oversee the Long Distance/NEC subcommittee with the goal of continuously improving food and beverage in the dining cars, Acela, and Northeast Regional trains. The subcommittee will include representation from States for Passenger Rail, Rail Passenger Association, and DEI organizations.
- **Onboard Service-** Amtrak will oversee the onboard service subcommittee to identify process improvements and frontline opportunities for improving food and beverage.
- **Recommendations Oversight-** This group will monitor Amtrak's efforts toward implementing the IIJA Food and Beverage Working Group's recommendations. This subcommittee shall issue a status report to Congress annually for five years that describes Amtrak's progress putting these recommendations into practice.



RETROFIT EXISTING CARS AND MAINTAIN FLEET

Retrofit Existing Cars and Maintain Fleet - Develop a program for improving repair and maintenance of frequently broken equipment – elevators, refrigeration, and grills.

RECOMMENDATION

Amtrak should consider subcontracting a third-party auditor to evaluate the service worthiness of all on board equipment used in the service of food and beverage that is currently slated to be in service for more than the next two years. (i.e., Refrigerators, HVAC, Elevators, Microwave ovens and grills) If, according to the audit, the equipment is deemed not reliable or predictably unable to withstand the tumult of two more years of over the road service, then Amtrak will schedule immediate replacement of said equipment. During this audit process Amtrak should equip each of the café cars and kitchens with at least one Turbo Chef or similar oven to improve the quality of food products that do not present well when prepared in a microwave. If Amtrak mechanical services is unable to change out this equipment at a reasonable pace this change out will be subcontracted to a qualified vendor. The entire project from audit to replacement should not take more than 12 months.

Additionally, Amtrak must consider alternatives or augmentation to the existing maintenance processes. Providing maintenance and upgrades to a fleet that is approaching the end of its scheduled service life is challenging under the best of circumstances. When the tremendous impact of the pandemic is factored in, the challenge is exponentially more difficult. Amtrak mechanical services saw a large drop in the number of employees during the pandemic. These positions were at the main overhaul bases, as well as at the larger maintenance depots around the country. Replacement parts have also become more difficult to procure as a result of global supply chain issues created by the pandemic. As Amtrak sees ridership continue to build to pre-pandemic levels, mechanical services continue to struggle with hiring and training employees to keep up with repairs and maintenance schedules. Amtrak must fill positions to replace craft employees (supervisors, electricians, carmen and sheet metal workers) to keep up with the demands required of the fleet.

BACKGROUND

Amtrak rolling stock equipment is on average over 33 years old. On long distance routes these numbers are the highest. With the implementation of the IJA there is now a clear plan to replace these aging cars and engines. For many of the routes in the country, however, these upgrades will not be in place for several years, in some cases more than a decade. Amtrak employees have been working with equipment that is old and in many cases equipment that fails while on the rails. Equipment is repaired to the best extent possible and returned to service, but in many cases fails again. An employee survey taken clearly

Car Type	Active Fleet	Avg Unit Age
Heritage	5	67
Ex-Metroliner	16	54
Amfleet I	435	45
Superliner I	227	41
Amfleet II	134	39
Horizon	65	32
Superliner II	163	26
Viewliner I	38	25
Viewliner II	117	6
Acela (First-Gen)	160	22

adapted from Amtrak FY22-27 Asset Line Plan

Figure 10 - Car Types

indicated that one of the most common and pressing requests for employees was equipment that functioned properly so that they could deliver the level of service that their passengers expect and deserve.

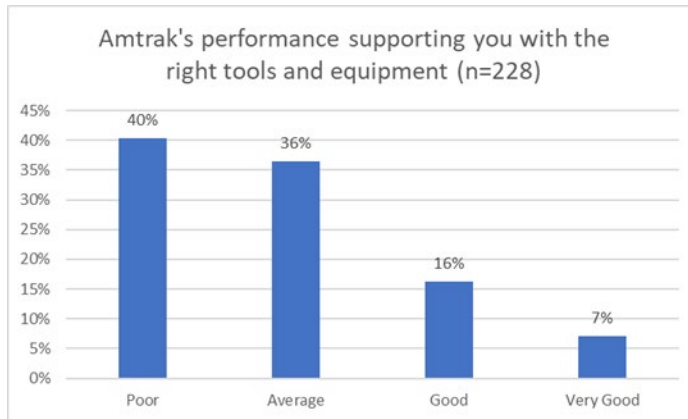


Figure 11 - Tools & Equipment Performance

“Make sure all equipment is functioning properly. Defects are consistently reported with no real repairs. Many times, we get the same equipment week after week with the same defects. - because a specific piece of equipment is working in the yards/or when the train is stationary, it doesn't mean it will function properly while the train is moving.”

“Ensure that the equipment onboard meets the needs of myself and the passengers. Example, some trains still use the 36 cup percolators to brew coffee which takes 20

to 30 minutes to brew. That's a problem when you have to brew more than 1 pot. I worked a 4-hour morning train that required 4 pots of coffee. That's approximately 2 hours of waiting on coffee to brew on a 4-hour trip. Which equals lots of angry people in the morning.”

This issue of equipment reliability, when further compounded by disruption of food service, is one of the primary themes of negative feedback received in the 2019, 2021, and 2022 Rail Passengers Association Onboard Experience Surveys.

Surveys, testimony, trip reviews, and letters to the editor of “Amtrak Fans” group with 33,000 members, “Amtrak Dining Car Fans” with 2000 members, recipients of the Rail Passengers Weekly Hotline with 21,301 subscribers support with photo evidence the level of disrepair that is allowed for most of the long-distance fleet. This state of disrepair has direct ramifications on the execution of food service onboard. Prioritization of the Superliner Refresh and restoration of all Sightseer Lounge Cars available were also common requests among the feedback of this audience of 56,301 of Amtrak's most loyal customers and supporters.

WMS (Warehouse Management System) inefficiency due to the delay between other systems such as SAP which is the system that material control uses. WMS does not work as intended. Material control does not have enough inventory on hand to repair equipment.

Elevator breakdowns are a constant issue across the Amtrak system and breakdown enroute. This causes inconvenience to customers. When elevators malfunction on bi-level equipment, employees cannot run up the stairs. This becomes a safety issue, and the dining car cannot provide food service. Instead, the option is serving food purchased along the route, such as pizza and sandwiches. Elevators are mostly specific to dining cars and are nearing the end of their functional service life. The elevators are dilapidated, and the manufacturer has gone out of business. Parts are hard to obtain or must be fabricated in house.



HVAC and refrigeration malfunction and break down enroute. This causes customer dissatisfaction and on board employees have no other recourse because there is no solution to fix the issue than to apologize without a solution other than providing service recovery which is usually a snack pack and water or in the scenario of refrigeration breakdown, no food service.

GOALS

- Equipment in place and fully functional to “bridge the gap” until the entire fleet is replaced.
- Turbo Chef or similar ovens in place to elevate the quality of rapidly prepared food items.
- Augment or enhance the ability of mechanical services to replace and maintain equipment on board the trains as measured by 95% equipment availability.
- Effective communication between OBS and Mechanical services regarding equipment condition and repair time frames.
- Mechanical services fully staffed and trained.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Amtrak management has already begun selective audits and replacement of equipment as described. We recommend the expansion of this audit to the entire fleet.
2. Work closely with mechanical services to assess what they have the capacity and training to do and where internal capacity demands, temporarily contract out the replacement and or repair of the on board equipment.
3. Where necessary, based on mechanical services capacity and training, contract out maintenance services for this equipment at various stations at strategic locations.
4. This system wide audit and all replacement should be completed within 12 months of the acceptance of this recommendation.
5. Amtrak will audit the process used for communicating malfunctioning equipment between on board services and mechanical services. Based on this audit Amtrak will revise or replace the current process so that on board employees are able to easily report issues and mechanical services can efficiently work repairs or replacements into their schedules.
6. Mechanical services will continue to build and train staff until optimal levels are met.

TIMELINE

These recommendations should be complete as soon as feasible.

ALIGN AMTRAK AND ARAMARK STAFF ROLES

Align Amtrak and Aramark staff roles to improve onboard F&B performance.

RECOMMENDATION

Implement a team approach to managing, measuring, and improving the provisioning of trains.

BACKGROUND

A survey of frontline OBS employees revealed numerous complaints about the train provisioning process, a process which is critical to the success of Amtrak's food and beverage business. At the same time, F&B management contends the vendor, Aramark, is doing an effective job of managing the supply of perishable and non-perishable items throughout the Amtrak system.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Management and many frontline employees disagree about the effectiveness of the F&B provisioning process. On board staff have voiced frustrations with stock levels (too low and too high) and how the supply chain works for some aspects of receiving goods and stocking those goods on board. From F&B management's perspective, "the current condition is not considered to be broken by all, just a small percentage of OBS." Based on conflicting reports of food shortages, food waste and unclear supply chain, this group recommends more collaboration in this aspect of food service and for future contracts to contain clear SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) in regards to vendor responsibility and performance.

ANALYSIS / CASE STUDY

After Amtrak employees in product development met with the Food and Beverage Working Group, members of the group had unanswered questions regarding the contracted vendor relationship with Aramark. Upon visiting the largest commissary and mechanical yard in the network, the team speculated that there were a series of small adjustments that could improve consistency and reduce the margin of error in vendor provisioned restock practices. However, in reviewing the comments of OBS employees in our frontline survey the team concluded that the customer-supplier relationship and daily interactions will require more than a few small adjustments. Instead, the team's recommendation is to implement a structured, collaborative process involving Amtrak and Aramark employees to improve the provisioning process and F&B performance on trains.

Survey responses of OBS employees covered a broad range of issues and concerns about the provisioning process. Second to mechanical and equipment problems, the most frequent complaints and targets for improvement cited by survey respondents was the provisioning process and the relationship with the vendor, Aramark. Complaints focused on both overprovisioning and under provisioning trains, as well as supplying incorrect products, and unwillingness to respond to requests for changes on orders.



OBS SURVEY COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROVISIONING PROCESS

"In my humble opinion, one of the biggest problems is getting the necessary and/or correct inventory. The food pars are never correct or never enough of the popular items. Breakfast is one of the weakest links. For example, one of my trains always leaves with 30-44 passengers and we're lucky if we get 10 omelets and 6 fruit plates. The passengers are always furious; it's absolutely embarrassing and ridiculous."

"We can do better at staffing food/beverage managers who actually adjust PARs to prevent waste. Being consistent with the service that the Aramark facilities provide. It has been documented that it becomes problematic if the LSA needs additional items or wants to make changes to the PAR."

"We need to ensure the proper products are on board the trains. One too many times has commissary sent out an incomplete PAR to the trains. Sometimes it is caught in time to bring a "backorder" other time it isn't caught until we are on the road. We as chefs and LSA's really need to verify our stock either before its brought to the train, or the trains need to be stock sooner."

"We also don't have the space to store these items when the par gets set to its max capacity, and causes every source of refrigeration to be used, which in turn causes mechanical failure."

"Getting Aramark on the right page with Amtrak's expectations...The service starts from the beginning which is Aramark. When placing a back order to Aramark it shouldn't be questioned or denied because it is out of the delivery time. The quality assurance on Aramark needs more attention because having expired food or bad produce affects our operation on the train. Passenger are paying a large amount of money for the train ride the least we can do is to provide fresh food and products."

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Amtrak management has identified opportunities to improve the provisioning process and offers the following suggestions:

1. Establish clear sales goals for all and set sell-through percentages to help standardize the provisioning process. By setting a sell-through percentage it would insure sufficient stock of critical need items.
2. Increase management presence onboard to monitor the sales process.
3. Establish clear sales goals and targets.
4. Improve Train Spoilage compliance.
5. Set usage & spoilage targets and remove/minimize ad-hoc OBOs.
6. Promote a better understanding that it is better to run out than overstock and spoil at end of trip,
7. Enhance the reporting system that communicates live train inventories.
8. Amtrak should evaluate sales and usage statistics by employee, by train, to measure selling efficiencies and waste factors. There are no metrics or measures for this today, but the data is available.

GOALS

- Agreement on the roles of Amtrak and Aramark employees in the provisioning process.
- Clear SOPs for Amtrak and Aramark employees who handle shipping, delivery, commissary, and processing of externally produced goods.
- An agreed set of performance metrics of the provisioning process at each commissary and for each route.
- Crew ownership and improvement of onboard performance metrics.
- Aramark improvement on service delivery metrics.

IMPLEMENTATION

Managing the provisioning of trains requires a team approach. Amtrak's OBS employees and Aramark employees need to work together to optimize the provisioning process. A culture of collaboration and open communication should be fostered to ensure that the teams are working effectively together to monitor, measure and improve the process.

To clarify the customer-supplier roles and responsibilities in the food and beverage provisioning process between Amtrak's OBS employees and Aramark employees, the following process can be implemented in each commissary:

1. Identify the key stakeholders: The first step in clarifying customer-supplier roles in the train provisioning process is to identify the key stakeholders. Bring the stakeholders together to complete the next step.
2. Map out the process: Share or create a visual representation of the train provisioning process at the commissary, including all the steps involved and the roles of each stakeholder. This will help identify any areas where there may be confusion or overlap in roles.
3. Review the Performance Metrics: To manage, measure, and improve the provisioning of trains, performance metrics need to be understood by all parties managing and/or affected by the process. Moreover, the rationale behind the setting of PARs should be clarified so that team members understand the cost equations associated with over supplying and under supplying items. OBS crew members should have information about the performance of the provisioning process as a contributing factor to their crew's and train's F&B performance.
4. Clarify Roles and Responsibilities: First, both Amtrak's OBS employees and Aramark employees need to understand their respective roles and responsibilities. A clear definition of roles and responsibilities will help avoid any confusion and ensure that the right tasks are being performed by the right people.
5. Identify problems and opportunities for improving the existing process: Use a team problem-solving method to describe what problems are occurring and to determine how to develop action plans for making improvements in the process.
6. Develop a Communication Plan: Once roles and responsibilities are defined, a communication plan needs to be developed to ensure that both teams are aware of what is expected of them. The communication plan should include regular meetings to review performance and discuss any issues that arise.



7. Train employees: Train all employees involved in the train provisioning process in their roles and responsibilities. The training should include problem identification, process improvement, communication, customer service, and specific job duties.
8. Implement a Continuous Improvement Process: To continuously improve the provisioning of trains, a continuous improvement process should be implemented. This process should include regular reviews of performance metrics, identification of opportunities for improvement, and implementation of solutions to address issues.

By following this process, Amtrak's OBS employees and Aramark employees can clarify their customer supplier roles in the food and beverage provisioning process and work together as a team to manage, measure, and improve the provisioning of trains. In addition, train crews can monitor and influence the provisioning process to optimize F&B performance and customers' experience on their routes.

TIMELINE

Engage the implementation process as soon as possible and within the guidelines of the congressional directive.

WASTE CONTROL AND RECYCLING

RECOMMENDATION

Encourage Amtrak to add three new sustainability initiatives to its annual sustainability report that focus on food and beverage services: increase the recycling and composting of materials generated from food and beverage-related activities; increase usage of biodegradable packaging and serving materials; establish more partnerships with local food banks near Amtrak commissaries to distribute safe food and beverage products approaching their expiration dates.

BACKGROUND

Sustainability is defined as the ability to fulfill the needs of current generations without compromising the needs of future generations, while ensuring a balance between economic growth, environmental care, and social well-being.¹ For the past decade, Amtrak has embraced sustainability as a company strategy to transform the customer experience, reduce its carbon footprint, and expand service to new markets across the country.

The provision of food and beverages services on Amtrak trains requires a broad range of activities. These include transporting products to commissaries, food packaging and storage, transport between commissaries and trains, food preparation, and serving the items to customers. In addition, there is food and beverage waste recovery and removal, and determining the best way to handle food and beverage products that have exceeded their printed expiration date but are still safe for consumption.

While Amtrak's current sustainability goals have focused on greenhouse gas emissions, diesel fuel and electricity use, and recycling of materials such as rails, windows, wire, and scrap metals, the company has not yet established specific goals for food and beverage packaging, recycling and composting, or food bank partnerships.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Amtrak has made commendable efforts to reduce carbon-based energy consumption at food and beverage commissaries, including employing high velocity fans to improve the efficiency of facility heating and cooling systems, installation of LED lights, and more use of battery-powered electric vehicles to transport products. Amtrak is also planning to deploy an array of solar power panels to provide electricity to its Ivy City commissary near Washington, DC.

Recycling of waste materials generated by food service cars on trains is a challenge for Amtrak. With an expansive rail network that passes through many cities and states, recycling regulations, recycling facilities, and recycling markets vary greatly. As a result, the majority of trash taken off the trains goes to landfills.

¹ Santander Universidades UK, 2023. <https://www.becas-santander.com/en/blog/what-is-sustainability.html#:~:text=Sustainability%20consists%20of%20fulfilling%20the,care%20and%20social%20well%2Dbeing>.



Amtrak does attempt to collect recyclable materials on some food service cars by placing recycling bins in accessible locations in the cars, but this only occurs on routes where collected recyclable materials have a place to go once the train reaches its destination.

Amtrak is pursuing the use of more biodegradable packaging and serving materials. Recent examples include replacing some packaging materials with compostable materials, the introduction of compostable sip lids and paper straws, and testing of compostable cutlery. However, Amtrak asserts that it simply does not have the buying power to convince many of its food and beverage suppliers to change the way they package their products. Further, Amtrak currently does have contract language in place that requires food and beverage suppliers to meet any Amtrak sustainability goals.

Amtrak has established agreements with local food banks near many of its food and beverage commissaries across the country. Items nearing their expiration dates that Amtrak will not sell on the trains are donated to these food banks, thereby keeping some of the unsold products from going to local landfills. In some instances, local food safety regulations have made entering into these food-donating agreements unworkable. Amtrak has stated it would like to form more of these partnerships, especially now that that federal Food and Drug Administration has developed food safety rules for donated items as described in [Food Code 2022 | FDA](#).

CASE STUDY

Amtrak long distance trains, with a capacity ranging from 200 to 400 passengers, generate trash over the course of their route. Due to the limited amount of space on the trains, trash is removed at locations along the route to prevent overflow. This same space limitation and the lack of locations that accept recyclable materials, especially in rural areas, prevents Amtrak from collecting recyclable materials on many of its long-distance routes.

GOALS

1. Promote Amtrak as a leader in transportation industry sustainability by including food and beverage services in Amtrak's ongoing sustainability activities and metrics.
2. Target food and beverage waste management, recycling, and community food bank partnerships as new focus areas in Amtrak's annual sustainability reports.

IMPLEMENTATION

To implement this recommendation, Amtrak shall do the following:

- Ensure the new fleet of Amtrak long-distance trains have more collection and storage capacity for recyclable materials.
- Add specific contract language to food and beverage supplier contracts that emphasizes the use of sustainable packaging.
- Work with local and regional authorities to accept more recyclable materials generated by Amtrak food and beverage services, including route endpoint and intermediate communities.

- Fund and dedicate resources to improve the tracking and measuring of recyclable and compostable materials generated by Amtrak's food and beverage services.
- Increase the number of food bank partnerships.
- Promote Amtrak's sustainability efforts in these new areas in press releases, marketing campaigns, and at public outreach events.



DEFINE VISION / STRATEGY FOR ALL 3 SERVICE LINES

RECOMMENDATION

Amtrak leadership should clearly define the Vision and Strategy for each of the 3 service lines, Long Distance, State sponsored routes and the Northeast Corridor.

BACKGROUND

Amtrak runs a complex operation in a variety of markets with a variety of partnerships and logistical challenges. It is also an organization with a long and complex history. This history has created expectations in the minds of employees, passengers, and the general public. Amtrak is emerging from an unprecedented global pandemic, re-staffing the organization at unseen levels and rates and has been given funding to rebuild almost the entire fleet. It is no surprise then that people with different perspectives have very different ideas or visions of what Amtrak Food and Beverage service could and should look like going forward. Long time riders want things to return to “the way it was”, younger riders want to see healthier and ecofriendly dining, business travellers want choices about efficiency and elevated service experiences. Long Distance travellers are often on trains for several days at a time and want to experience a more refined, relaxed dining experience. Passengers on state sponsored routes are on the train for a day or less and may not be as concerned about the same things as Long Distance passengers. The Northeast corridor is made of more business travellers than either of the other route types and passengers have their own unique expectations.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

During the FBWG’s research phase the team found a variety of opinions exist in the ranks of Amtrak management as well, as diverse as: *“We want passengers to walk past the food in the stations because they know that the food on board is going to be so much better”* to *“The café car is nothing but a convenience store on wheels.”* Without gaining collective clarity about the future of Food and Beverage on board, there is simply no way for employees to understand what is expected of them or for passengers to know what to expect in terms of Food and Beverage quality and service. Despite the influx of new employees and equipment, if a new, clear and desirable future state is left undefined, the future of the organization will be left to chance. Amtrak is in a perfect position to define this future and engage all members of the organization and traveling public in achieving it. Because of the different needs of each of the service lines, a clear operational vision must be set for each.

ANALYSIS

Amtrak on board service employees operate in a highly autonomous fashion. There is now a bimodal split between employees with long length of service and some very recently hired employees. In the absence of a clear and compelling Vision and Strategy the culture that is currently in place will remain the dominant culture of the future. There is an old adage “what we say is what we become”. Our survey and interviews with the front-line staff suggest that they are on a precipice – they desperately want things to improve but are not seeing those improvements in their workplace.

“Feed the coach passengers! It's a blatant division of high class segregation if we don't.”

“Treat the long distance network how you treat the NEC.”

“Talk to us. Tell us what is happening. Tell us what to expect on our trips. Help us when we need help.”

This is a group of people that stand ready to do amazing work – The first step to unleashing their passion is to provide a clear Vision of the future.

GOALS

- Set a clear Food and Beverage vision and strategy for each of the service lines.
- Engage employees in committing to achieving this Vision.
- Use the vision to explain strategic and business decisions.
- Use the vision to keep the organization on track and moving forward as you would a navigational beacon.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Senior leaders from on board services, marketing and product development, Food and Beverage and Mechanical services must meet to define the Food and Beverage Vision for each of the Service Lines. Each organization must commit to supporting the other to achieve the Vision.
- Senior leaders should share the vision across the company, listening to concerns, and empowering local leadership to engage employees and solve for these concerns.
- Continue to use the Vision as challenges arise, and successes occur to explain decisions and provide continuity in the organization.
- Teams should be engaged in discovering opportunities to problem solve ways to achieve strategic and operational goals on a local level.



EXAMPLE VISION / STRATEGY DOCUMENT:

Long Distance F & B Vision and Strategy

- The quality of our food and beverage offerings, combined with our superior level of customer service and appearance of the train will be so good that passengers regularly report that they wait to dine with us instead of choosing options in the station or local community.
 - Long distance has a “core” dining experience across the nation. 75% of our meals are consistent consistently cooked, plated and served regardless of route. This enables us to take advantage of scale, and dial in our most popular dishes.
 - We will have 25% of our meals that are regionally or locally focused. That is, they are either sourced locally or they represent the region. This allows our chefs and LSA’s to support our need for national consistency and predictability and at the same time celebrate the unique nature of the Long Distance route they are on.
 - We will commit to work with our vendors to ensure quality food and beverage items are delivered at the right time, to the right train, in the correct quantity so we can provide the best experience possible to our customers.
 - We will use all the tools available to us to make sure we are communicating with other divisions to help them solve for issues that we may have while under way.
 - We will prioritize employee training to help our team develop the skills they need to be successful.

Figure 12 – Example: Long Distance F&B Strategy

TIMELINE

This vision and strategy for all 3 lines should be set and communicated within 9 months of Amtrak adopting this as a recommendation.

ALIGN AMTRAK'S ONBOARD SERVICE CULTURE

Align Amtrak's onboard service culture and establish management practices to focus on delivering high quality customer experience with food and beverage service excellence, supported by train and/or crew-based teams.

BACKGROUND

Amtrak's food and beverage service has faced ongoing pressure over the past 20 years to reduce costs and return a profit, a feat no train service in the US or abroad has ever accomplished. The company's mandated moves to reduce cost have included staff reductions, shifting from chef prepared meals to prepackaged meals, and removing dining cars from routes, resulting in decreases in customer satisfaction, increases in complaints, and expressions ranging from concern to disillusionment from front line employees. During the pandemic, the company's response to improving service was limited. Currently, Amtrak food service is in a recovery process that is addressing issues occurring prior to and during the pandemic:

1. Reduction in quality and variety: Amtrak reduced the quality and variety of its food and beverage offerings, which decreased customer satisfaction. Many passengers complained about the lack of fresh, healthy options and the over-reliance on pre-packaged meals and snacks.
2. Decreased access to food and beverage services: Amtrak had eliminated or reduced food and beverage services on many of its routes, leaving passengers without access to food and drink during long journeys. This led to customer dissatisfaction and complaints.
3. Decreased staffing: Amtrak was compelled to reduce the number of on board service staff, which led to decreased service quality and longer wait times for passengers. This has led to complaints about slow service and staff who have been overworked and unable to provide adequate service.
4. Inconsistent service: Amtrak's food and beverage services were inconsistent, with some passengers reporting excellent service while others report poor service. This led to confusion and frustration among passengers who expect a consistent level of service across all routes and journeys.
5. Concern and disengagement among front-line employees who had little control of the circumstances preventing them from performing their jobs effectively. They came to work knowing very little about what is expected of them with respect to F&B sales and service or how their work contributes to the company's F&B business.

The most critical success factor to realizing Congress' request for improved F&B services depends on Amtrak leaders supporting and guiding a realignment of the company's culture, management practices, and on board services as the company works to fully recover.



CURRENT CONDITIONS

Perhaps the most salient feature of Amtrak's Food and Beverage business is that services are delivered by employees who rarely have face to face contact with a supervisor or manager. Further, employees are provided little to no guidance about any goals and objectives for the Food and Beverage service on the train they are working.

In general, the only other contacts an on board employee may have with supervisors and/or managers occurs either when a specific complaint is registered by a passenger or on the infrequent occasion when a supervisor/manager rides the train (the ratio of the number of trains/crews in service to supervisors/managers is so high it severely limits the likelihood of an employee seeing their supervisor or manager on any given day).

The bottom line is that most OBS employees perform their jobs with a high degree of autonomy and a nearly complete absence of supervisory support or oversight. Exceptions may occur on some routes, particularly state-supported routes. For example, the Downeaster, Pacific Surfliner, where there is more direct engagement by managers and supervisors with on board employees in communicating and supporting food and beverage performance objectives.

As OBS employees are working without regular supervision and without direction on F&B service goals and objectives, it is reasonable to assume that delivering excellent F&B service to passengers occurs when employees feel personally compelled to do so as a function of the professional training they have received and internalized, their own personal and professional standards, and the monetary incentives of customer tips.

FRONTLINE AMTRAK EMPLOYEE SURVEY

The FBWG developed and deployed a smartphone survey in October 2022, to engage frontline onboard service (OBS) employees and asked them to assess conditions supporting or diminishing their ability to provide excellent F&B customer service.

An additional objective of this survey was for the FBWG to go directly to employees accountable for F&B customer services and get their ideas and opinions about how to improve service. Those employees' suggestions are included in other relevant sections of this report's recommendations.

Employees were informed their responses would remain anonymous and would be included in the FBWG's recommendations to Congress. 229 employees completed the survey over a two-month period (note: some questions were not answered by all respondents). All rating scales were 4-points, ranging from Poor, Average, Good, and Very Good.

During the process of soliciting participation in the survey, several members of the working group received comments from a number of employees who declined to be surveyed. The two main reasons employees chose not to participate were: 1) concerns about anonymity, and 2) doubts expressed about the likelihood of any substantial, positive action resulting from their opinions.

Survey questions about employee support were limited to 5 areas. We asked employees to rate:

1. Training.
2. Communications and information.
3. Tools and equipment needed for work.
4. On board and hotel accommodations for employees.
5. Necessary menu items to serve customers.

Ratings and representative quotes from respondents on these 5 areas are presented in the sections below.

TRAINING

Employee suggestions for improving training were directed toward new employee training, supervisor training on the point of sale (POS) system, and training for management.

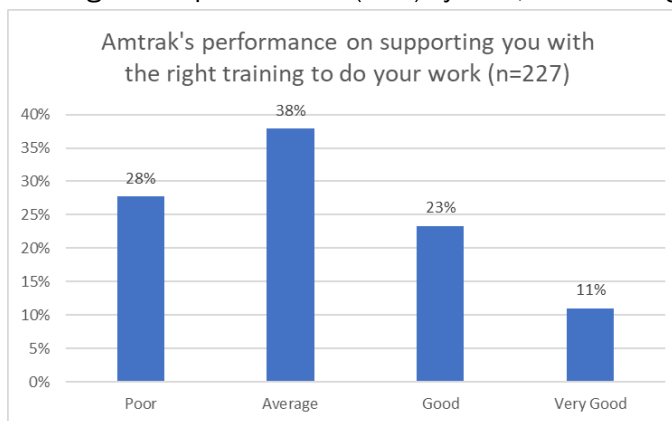


Figure 13 - Training Performance

“All service attendants should require additional training on how to properly serve customers.”

“More than just the right training, it should be more the right information to trainees of what to expect out on the road.”

“Proper training procedures. Not enough hands-on training in class with POS or essential documentation throughout day-to-day operations.”

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Employee suggestions about communication and information asked for consistent, timely information about changes improved communications. Two major themes surfaced in comments about communication and information:

1. Employees want more information from management about what to expect and what changes are happening.
2. Employees want Amtrak to listen to them when they have concerns and to ask for feedback prior to making changes in processes and menu items.

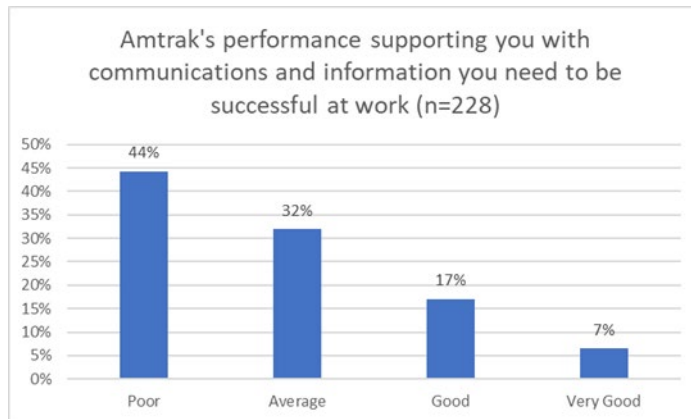


Figure 14 - Communication Performance

"There needs to be better communication and more of a partnership between OBS & Food/Beverage...By working together and actually listening to each other I think a lot of good changes can come about.."

"...the situations that could have been prevented and being blindsided by things that should have been communicated to me by supervisors."

"Communication...Amtrak needs to actually listen to the OBS employees as we are the

front-line employees as we speak and interact with the passengers daily and know what they like and expect from Amtrak and Amtrak needs to support the OBS... Have an actual working POS system in the cafe cars where we do not have everyday problems with the system."

TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

According to Amtrak's FY 2022-2027 Service and Asset Line Plans "much of the Amtrak passenger train fleet is nearing the end of its useful service life. This aged fleet limits Amtrak's ability to incorporate technological innovations for service efficiency, modern amenities for its customers, and constrains its abilities to grow service to meet demand (p.24)." The challenges of Amtrak's aging fleet are one of the greatest concerns for employees providing on board F&B services and equipment breakdowns are the most frequently cited problems in employees' comments. Issues with HVAC, refrigeration, frequency of breakdowns, and unavailable equipment were key themes.

"Our equipment is old & subpar. Refrigeration is sometimes a problem, not cooling at times. Mechanical is advised but do not always repair. Our Cafe lounge has a restroom which smells due to improper dumping and sanitizing of the bathroom tank at end of each trip. It's as if Amtrak doesn't care as long as food sells. If the restroom is locked to avoid use & smell spillover, there would be reprimands and write ups of the employee. The message being perceived is just sell the good & make money. This all started after outsourcing the job to an entity that does not have the same standards or devotion as an invested company employee."

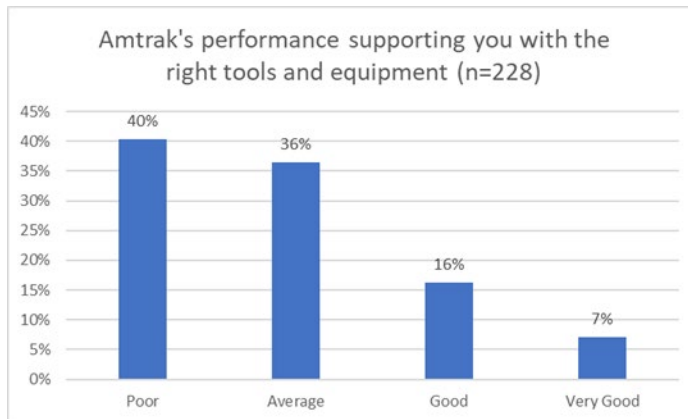


Figure 15 - Tools & Equipment Performance

trains.”

“Make sure all equipment is functioning properly. Defects are consistently reported with no real repairs. Many times, we get the same equipment week after week with the same defects. - because a specific piece of equipment is working in the yards/or when the train is stationary, it doesn't mean it will function properly while the train is moving.”

“Equipment that works and manpower. There are employees that have low morale and do the bare minimum. I feel this is because there is little supervision on board

“New equipment on the west, not the refresh. The East coast continues to get new equipment while the west struggles with broken items on the regular.

“Better storage, updates to equipment, better serving trays, remodel dining car to have a mise en place with shelves and counter.”

“Equipment is an issue and the quality of food; I think if we want respect as a class act organization we have to show up.”

EMPLOYEES' ON BOARD AND HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

Employees expressed concerns about the conditions, safety, and proximity of hotels for layovers. In addition, employees also expressed concerns about the on board accommodations (e.g., air quality, proximity to passengers).

“All hotel layovers need to be at least 8 hours or longer. Serving the public without proper rest is tough.”

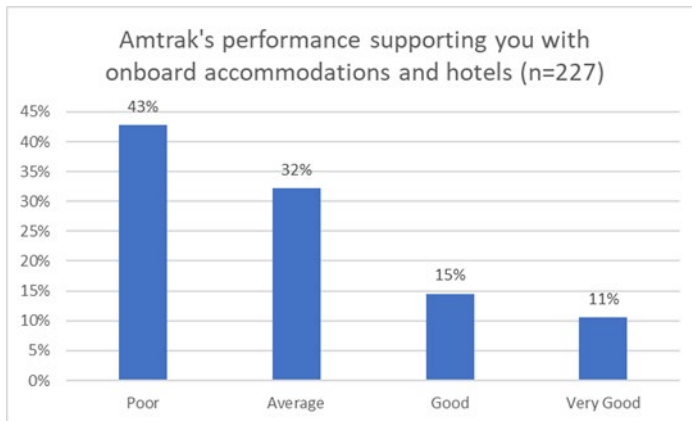


Figure 16 - Onboard Accommodations Performance

"We can't rest in the same cars as passengers and butted up against the engine bring our car back."

NECESSARY MENU ITEMS TO SERVE CUSTOMERS

80% of respondents rated Amtrak's support for providing necessary menu items as Poor or Average. Employees offered numerous suggestions for improving food and beverage services, addressing provisioning levels (PAR), improving the quality and freshness of food, methods for introducing new menu items,

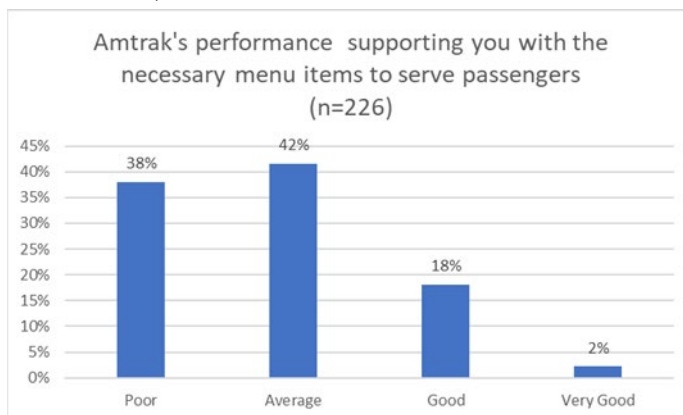


Figure 17 - Menu Items Performance

"Incorporate frontline employee input prior to putting together new menus. Run test meal services at full capacity on moving equipment, call it a test run inform passengers ahead of time."

"Keep enough par on the train for the whole trip. I am finding low par numbers that don't support the volume on train. Put ownership on those that are supposed to keep the train properly stocked so LSA can provide good service to paying passengers."

"The people that design our menus should have to prepare those meals with us while on the train. I believe they'll have a unique experience attempting to prepare those meals when not in a stationary setting. I've seen the videos, it's very easy in a class setting."

ADDITIONAL SIGNIFICANT THEMES

Two additional survey themes which are relevant to this recommendation appeared in responses to the question, **“What changes could Amtrak make in F&B services that would help you with your work?”** First, there were many comments suggesting the need to adjust staffing levels.

“Proper manning on trains for the number of customers expected to serve. One person cannot properly handle over 2000 to 3600 customers over a 2 to 4 day period efficiently. Amtrak is cutting on board service reps & ticketing reps while they expect the service to remain exemplary. It’s just impossible. They are doing this across the board. One attendant to handle 5 cars. One sleeper attendant to handle rooms & cleaning of rooms being reused without proper cleaning or sanitation.”

The second issue raised by a number of employees concerned issues related to the train provisioning process and relational problems and conflicts with the vendor Aramark.

“Being consistent with the service that Aramark facilities provide. It has been documented that it becomes problematic if the LSA needs additional items or wants to make changes to the PAR.”

BEST PRACTICES: AMTRAK CASE STUDY: THE COAST STARLIGHT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Amtrak’s Coast Starlight Improvement Project, launched in late 2014 and terminated in 2017, represents a best practice previously applied as a pilot program to evaluate the potential for an employee engagement and union collaboration process to improve the financial performance of the company’s Food and Beverage services. While the project was extremely successful in reducing operating losses and increasing CSI scores, it was discontinued. Nonetheless, the working group recommends reconsidering the project as a guide for reengaging the workforce and as a means to creating a culture that delivers an enhanced customer experience and excellent food and beverage services.

In late 2014, the Amtrak Long Distance Division piloted the Coast Starlight Improvement Project in response to growing pressure from Congress and the OIG to cut Food and Beverage losses in the LD business line. HR 749(Sec. 206) directed Amtrak to develop a plan to eliminate the operating loss for food and beverage service on board its trains and barred the use of federal funds, beginning five years after enactment of the Act, to cover any such loss on a route operated either by Amtrak or by an alternative passenger rail service provider in lieu of Amtrak.

To sponsor this pilot project, a Joint Leadership Team (JLT) comprising local managers and union leaders in the Southwest Division was formed. This team’s shared accountability was to establish an employee engagement effort and sponsor task forces charged with closing the gap on F&B losses through:

- Cost Reduction
- Revenue Enhancement
- Customer and Employee Satisfaction

Leaders of the project initiated their work together by forming the following charter:

Create and sustain a culture that fosters all departments working together, in unity

- For our People
- For our Customers
- For our Service
- One AMTRAK

The Coast Starlight Project was modeled after another extremely, financially successful employee engagement initiative underway in Amtrak's Mechanical Division at the Beech Grove Facility. At the time of the Coast Starlight's pilot launch, Beech Grove Mechanical's management and union leaders had overseen initiatives totaling over \$40M in cost savings, cost avoidance, and new revenue from May 2011 through December 2014. By September 2015, Beech Grove documented over \$52 Million in gains (see chart below). The successful revitalization of Beech Grove Mechanical is directly attributable to the strategy of engaging employees and offering them the accountability to improve operations.

\$50M Goal Tracking Chart

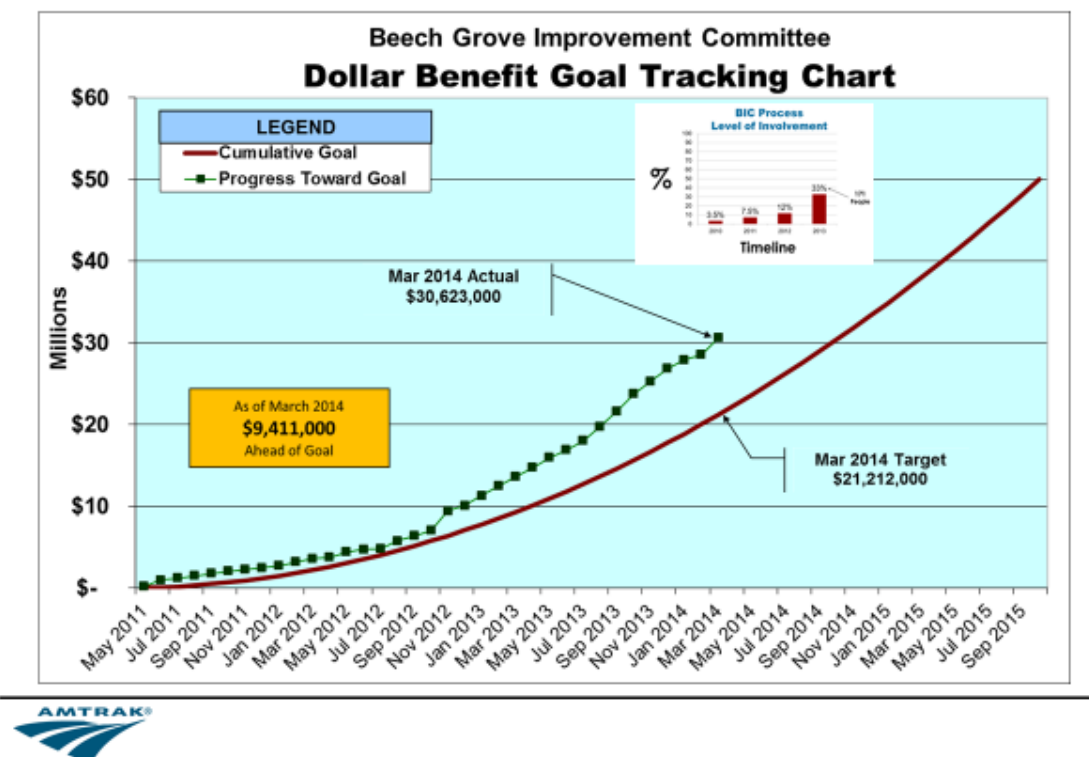


Figure 18 - Dollar Benefit Goal Chart

In the case of the Coast Starlight train operation, task forces were formed by the Coast Starlight's JLT involved employees & employee work groups in identifying opportunities & resolving business issues in the train's operations.

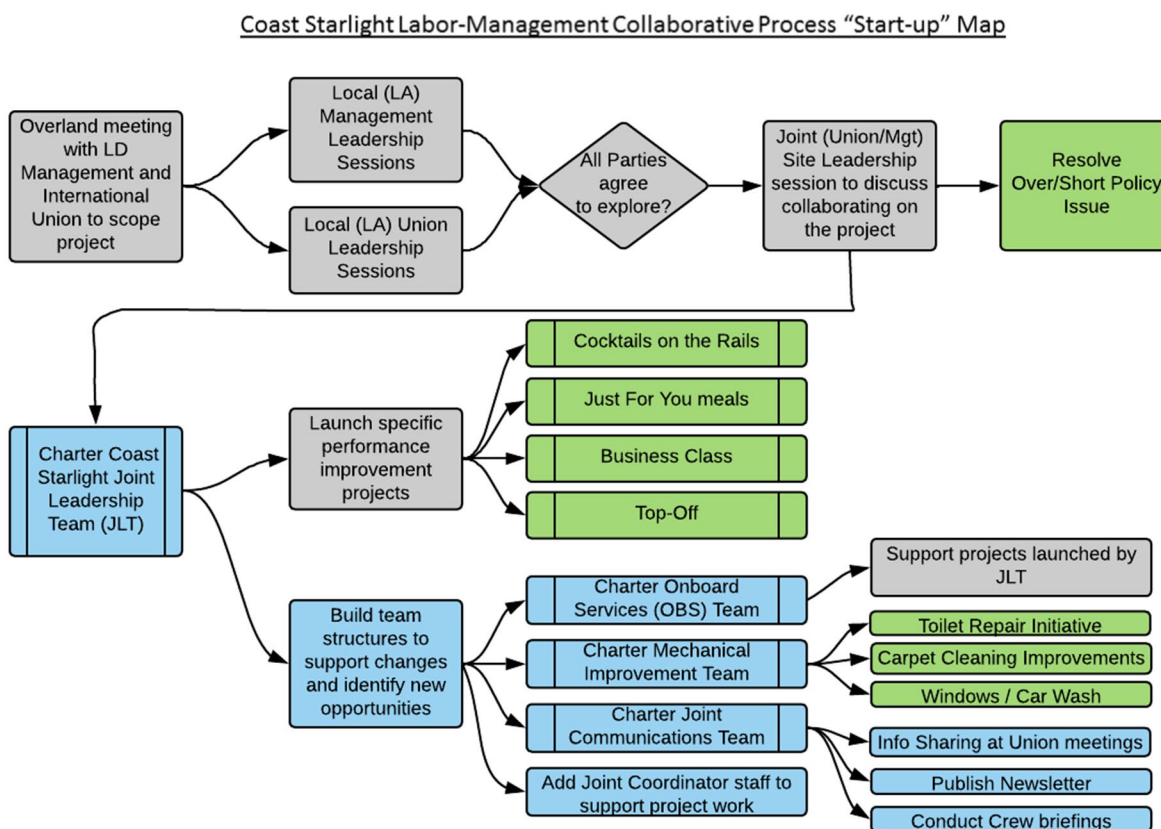


Figure 19 - Coast Starlight Start-up map

In 2 years', Amtrak employees working with the Coast Starlight reduced its operating losses by over **\$6 Million**. Revenue and cost savings initiatives targeting ridership and food and beverage business included:

1. Refurbishing unused cars and introducing Business Class on the Coast Starlight line.
2. Developing and offering "Just For You" meals to coach class customers (2 employees received PSSA recognition for this initiative).
3. Cocktails on the Rails.
4. Modifying the provisioning process to a Top-off program.
5. Enhanced coach boarding.

At least 15 other team initiatives were launched by Coast Starlight employees during the 2014-2017 timeframe (see Appendix). The early success of the project spread to other trains in the Southwest



division where teams championed revenue enhancement, customer service, and cost savings projects.

Amtrak leaders should consider the Coast Starlight project, a successful project in it's own "backyard" as a model for Amtrak to develop an on board culture that delivers positive customer experiences and food and beverage service excellence. A culture of service excellence depends on engaging and empowering employees and on board crews in applying their skills, resolving problems and challenges, and working together to deliver exceptional service. In following this approach, Amtrak leaders should engage leaders of the represented unions to explore how best to engage their members in this process.

The FBWG's perspective is that improving the food and beverage service capabilities and engagement of on board employees will have a direct, positive affect on customer satisfaction, which in turn can lead to increased revenues and profitability for the business. Additionally, when employees are engaged, feel satisfied and valued, they are more likely to provide better customer service, leading to a positive, reinforcing cycle in the service profit chain. Here is how the positive cycle works:

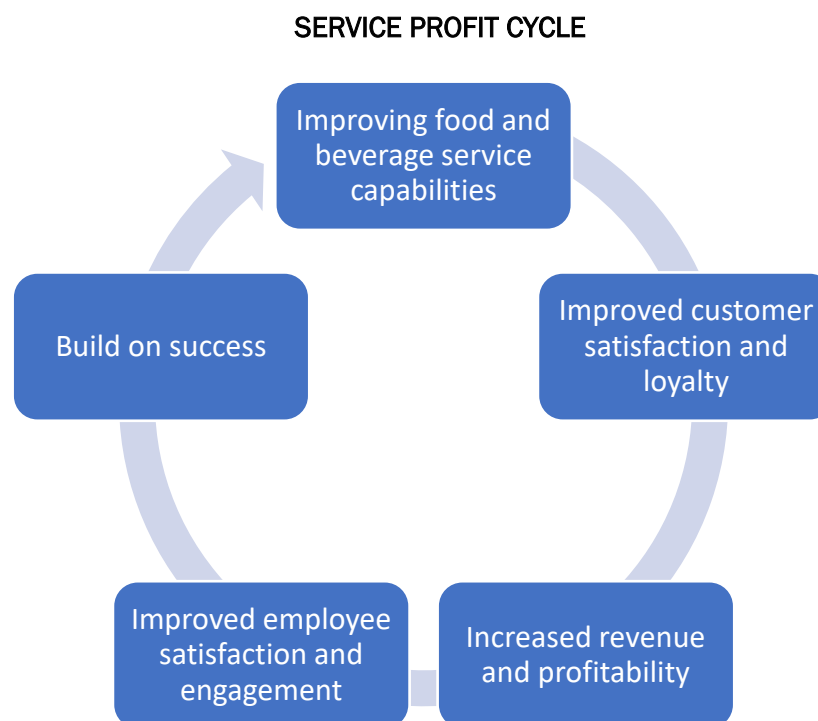


Figure 20 - SERVICE PROFIT CYCLE

1. **Improving food and beverage service capabilities:** By providing on board employees with the necessary training and resources to improve their food and beverage service capabilities, they become better equipped to meet the needs of customers. This leads to:

- a. **Improved customer satisfaction and loyalty:** When on board employees are able to provide better food and beverage service, customers are more likely to be satisfied with their overall experience. This leads to repeat business and positive word-of-mouth recommendations, which, in turn, generates:
 - i. **Increased revenue and profitability:** Increased customer satisfaction leads to higher revenues for Amtrak as a result of repeat business and positive reviews.
2. **Improved employee satisfaction and engagement:** When employees see the positive impact of their efforts on the business, they feel valued and motivated to continue to provide excellent service. This can lead to improved employee satisfaction, which can in turn lead to lower turnover rates and decreased costs associated with hiring and training new employees.
3. **Build on success:** With improved employee satisfaction and a positive work environment, the business can continue to invest in employee training and resources, leading to even better food and beverage service capabilities and customer satisfaction.

Overall, improving on board employees' food and beverage service capabilities and employee satisfaction can create a positive cycle in the service profit chain, ultimately leading to increased revenues and profitability for the business. Research by Gallup Organization reports that “compared with business units in the bottom quartile, those in the top quartile of engagement realize substantially better customer engagement, higher productivity, better retention, fewer accidents, and 21% higher profitability. Engaged workers also report better health outcomes.”

RECOMMENDATION

Align Amtrak's onboard service culture and establish management practices to focus on delivering high quality customer experience with food and beverage service excellence, supported by train and/or crew-based teams.

GOALS

The goals for this initiative should be set by Amtrak leadership and aligned with the direction set by Congress. The implementation process allows for the opportunity for Amtrak employees to participate in setting and achieving F&B service objectives in their teams. Goal areas should include:

1. Enhance employee engagement. Objectives to achieve this could include increasing employee satisfaction or engagement scores, reducing employee turnover, or increasing participation in training and development programs.
2. Improve food and beverage revenue. Objectives could include increased revenue/passenger, for state-supported trains – local supplier revenue goals, local supply/total revenue, increase percentage of passengers served.
3. Improve customer experience. Objectives to achieve this could include increasing the percentage of customers who rate their experience as "excellent" or "very good," or reducing the number of customer complaints or negative reviews.



4. Increase customer loyalty. Objectives could include increasing repeat business, generating more positive customer reviews or referrals, reducing customer churn, Net Promoter Score.

IMPLEMENTATION

Set a course to realign Amtrak's on board service culture towards delivering high-quality customer experience with food and beverage service excellence. To achieve this, we recommend the following steps:

1. **Assess the current culture of the on board service organization:** Conduct a thorough assessment of the current culture of the on board service organization. This will involve holding leadership listening/dialogue sessions with frontline employees to identify and acknowledge the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that affect customer experience, employee engagement, and revenue. Collect feedback from employees and customers to identify areas where improvement is needed.
2. **Develop a vivid description of the desired culture:** Based on the assessment, develop a vivid description of the desired culture of the on board service organization. This vision should include a set of values, behaviours, and attitudes that are aligned with Amtrak's overall mission and goals. Developing Amtrak OBS' vivid description of the future results in a combination of what leadership sees out ahead and what the people in the OBS organization desire for the future. This process helps everyone envision their role in a positive future. The visioning process establishes an active blueprint for designing and building the future. Other organizations that have deployed this process discover it can inspire commitment and drive the organization and its people to find creative solutions to and direction.

The absence of a clear vision supported by employees and leadership is the alternative for Amtrak's OBS organization which, at best, will ensure a culture characterized by mediocre performance and an inability to achieve this organization's strategic imperatives.

3. **Operationalize a plan for achieving the desired culture:** Develop a comprehensive plan that outlines the steps required to achieve the desired culture. This plan should include specific initiatives and activities that will be undertaken to promote employee engagement and collaboration. It should also include a timeline for implementation and clear performance metrics to track progress.
4. **Communicate the vision and plan to employees:** Communicate the vision and plan to all employees in the on board service organization. This should be done in a clear and concise manner, emphasizing the importance of employee engagement and collaboration in achieving excellence in food and beverage service. Provide opportunities for employees to ask questions and provide feedback.
5. **Provide leadership and engagement skills training and resources:** Provide training and resources to help managers, ARASA Supervisors, and LSAs develop the skills and knowledge needed to support the desired culture. This should include training in leadership skills,

teamwork, communication, food and beverage customer service, and other relevant topics. Provide resources such as tools and technology to support collaboration and engagement.

6. **Promote employee engagement, crew teamwork, and collaboration:** Encourage and reward employee engagement and collaboration. Focus on developing crew teams, reinforce team performance and provide opportunities for employees to share ideas and collaborate on projects. Recognize and reward employees and teams who demonstrate the desired values, behaviours, and attitudes.
7. **Measure and evaluate progress:** Monitor progress towards achieving the desired culture and adjust the plan as necessary. Use performance metrics to track progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives and activities. Solicit feedback from employees and customers to continuously improve the plan.

By following these steps, Amtrak can shift the culture of its on board service organization towards greater employee engagement and collaboration. In turn, these actions will lead to improved food and beverage service and sales, increased customer satisfaction, and ultimately, improved revenue for Amtrak.

TIMELINE

Within 60 days, Amtrak leaders can achieve the first 4 steps of the implementation process outlined in the previous section.

In addition, within 60 days, OBS leadership will select and implement one of two options described below to launch pilot projects with on board employees and initiate actions to improve food and beverage services. Amtrak leadership may elect to deploy an alternative process with the condition that within 60 days, they have initiated actions to engage onboard employees in improving food and beverage services.

Option A

1. Launch a pilot project in one region or city.
2. Demonstrate a sustainable process.
3. Identify and expand to the next site.

Option B

1. Launch pilot projects on 3 routes (Long Distance, State-Supported, NEC/Acela) and launch concurrently.
2. Demonstrate sustainable processes.
3. Identify and expand to additional sites.



ESTABLISH A RAPID CYCLE PROCESS

RECOMMENDATION

Establish a rapid cycle process for evaluating new menu items, new products, and changes affecting on board food and beverage services.

BACKGROUND

This process would enable Amtrak to obtain customer feedback and engage food service employees in developing and evaluating the F&B products/changes prior to full implementation. Overall, the establishment of a rapid cycle testing process for new menu items, products, and changes to food and beverage services will improve the quality of our food and beverage services and enhance the overall customer experience. The key to this process is to actively involve chefs, LSAs, and other employees in the development and testing of menus, menu items, and changes.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

A survey completed by 238 frontline OBS employees reveals significant challenges in the quality and preparation of various food items in café and dining cars (e.g., poor quality of panko chicken entrée served in dining cars, stromboli, microwaved (versus oven), and served in café cars). These issues have been attributed to difficulties in standardizing food preparation due to the use of dissimilar techniques and equipment by food specialists, chefs, and LSAs (Lead Service Attendants) as well as inadequate testing of menu items. Some excellent menu items developed in the Amtrak test kitchen may turn out to be difficult to prepare on a moving train, without fully considering the on board conditions, the time required to prepare a specific item, and the varying degrees of knowledge and skills of food specialists, chefs, and LSAs and other food service staff.

ANALYSIS

Overall, the challenges that Amtrak is facing with the quality and preparation of its food items highlight the importance of standardizing food preparation processes in a decentralized food service operation. By reconfiguring the menu planning process, training, and use of equipment and facilities, Amtrak can ensure that all food service staff are able to provide high-quality, consistent menu items to its passengers.

GOALS

- Improved consistency and quality of menu items.
- Higher customer satisfaction ratings of food and beverage service.
- Reduced food costs and waste.
- Improved brand image of Amtrak and Amtrak Food & Beverage.
- Improved accuracy and usefulness of Amtrak Service Guides.

IMPLEMENTATION

To implement this process, we recommend that a team be established to oversee the testing process. This team should include test kitchen chefs, onboard chefs, LSAs, and other employees engaged in food and beverage service, to ensure that "on-the-train" preparation and serving of new menu items and menu changes are evaluated effectively. Teams should also include designated participants from state organizations for changes planned on state-supported service lines.

The testing process should include the following steps:

1. Design new menu items, products, and changes to food and beverage services based on F&B criteria, customer feedback, Amtrak chefs' contributions, industry trends, and the availability of ingredients.
2. In collaboration with on board staff, testing of new menu items on board trains (Diners, Café Cars) and any changes to food and beverage services on a small scale to assess the quality, taste, presentation, and to develop best methods for preparation and service of menu items.
3. Gathering feedback from customers and employees on the new menu items, products, and changes to food and beverage services through surveys and focus groups.
4. Analyzing the feedback and making necessary adjustments to the menu items, products, and changes to food and beverage services.
5. Re-testing the adjusted menu items, products, and changes to food and beverage services to assess whether the changes have addressed the issues identified in the feedback.
6. Finalizing the menu items, products, and changes to food and beverage services processes, training materials, and service guides and implementing them across the Amtrak system.

By establishing a rapid cycle testing process, Amtrak can ensure that new menu items, products, and changes to food and beverage services are properly assessed before full implementation. This process will enable Amtrak to identify and address any issues early on, before they become bigger problems.

TIMELINE

Launch the implementation team within 60 days and according to congressional directive.



UPGRADE OBS EMPLOYEE TRAINING

Upgrade OBS employee training to include Customer Experience and Food Service training.

RECOMMENDATION

Develop a curriculum of food preparation and service training for promoting elevated customer experiences. It is recommended that Amtrak upgrade the structure of the existing training program to include a craft and location specific training program, and to extend the training of new hires at their home base so they are adequately prepared to begin work on board. This recommendation includes the following components:

- The business and food service models and Vision and Strategy for Amtrak's F&B services and routes.
- Development and implementation of a specific meal preparation and service curriculum specific to the job roles of chef, food specialist, and LSA.
- Food service sales and upselling.
- Customer service and food preparation simulation exercises on stationary equipment.
- Regular, recurring training for all food service employees

BACKGROUND

Amtrak's current training for on board food service workers, which includes chefs, food specialists, and LSAs, covers the basics of food safety and customer service. While this training is essential, it does not provide sufficient training on meal preparation and using food service as an opportunity to deliver an enhanced customer experience. In addition, employees receive no information or education about the business side of the food and beverage service and how it supports Amtrak's operation.

Food and beverage services can be a valuable opportunity to enhance the customer journey on Amtrak trains. By providing high-quality meals, attentive service, and personalized attention to dietary needs and preferences, OBS employees can help create a positive and memorable experience for customers.

Effective meal preparation is critical to providing customers with high-quality food and beverage service. This requires a full understanding of ingredients, preparation techniques, and presentation skills. However, the current training provided by Amtrak does not adequately cover these topics. As a result, food service workers may lack the skills and knowledge necessary to deliver high-quality meals that meet customer expectations.

CURRENT SITUATION

Post-pandemic changes resulted in the training program being restructured. Previously, training was handled by a local trainer who understood the process of each crew base. Currently, the training center in Delaware deploys classroom trainers to hub cities, conducting mass training classes that may not

benefit the class. General trainings such as peer to peer, CPR & First Aid, sexual harassment etc. are all trainings that are acceptably mixed with other crafts.

In the current new employee training process, week 3 consists of skills week. Skills week is led by a select number of Training Resource Employees (“TRE’s”). There is no prior training or expectation set for them and they are often new employees who do not have the adequate knowledge and experience to lead classes. No prior training or expectation is given to training resource employees; therefore, the curriculum is nonexistent, resulting in inconsistent information given to new hires each class. The “service” portion of training is left for on board training for the most part.

When new hires go on their initial training trips, it is during a regular serviced trip making it difficult to train employees from scratch. Trainers are tasked with providing high levels of service while teaching trainees. Often the trainer is too focused on providing the service, so the trainee is pushed aside and not given quality training. Mandating simulation meal services as part of the training class would better prepare new employees by giving them a broader idea of what to expect and a visual of how operations function.

For current employees, new items or menus are introduced via paper notices. These are often overlooked and can become confusing. There is no type of training in existence that helps employees upsell products or how to handle and store items. Physical, face-to-face training sessions should be mandatory and consistent.

When traditional dining was re-introduced on the Western routes Amtrak piloted a new food safety training program – The Serve Safe Certification. Chefs and food specialists received a full day of training with a proctored test to verify comprehension. Amtrak will continue to use this new program as it returns full-service dining to Long Distance routes.

GOALS

The primary goal of this recommendation is to redesign some elements of training for OBS employees assigned to food service roles so that:

- New employees understand the F&B business and their role in supporting business performance, operational improvements, and customer satisfaction.
- New employees have demonstrated their ability to prepare food and beverage items prior to working on board.
- OBS food service employees have learned and practiced the selling and upselling skills.
- Changes to menu items and food service procedures are successfully, consistently implemented.

IMPLEMENTATION

Charter a task force to develop a curriculum of food preparation and service training for promoting elevated customer experiences. The task force should include individuals with diverse expertise from Amtrak training department, Product Development, Food and Beverage service organization, train



management, Executive Chef SW Division, test kitchen and OBS employees (including the roles of chef, Café LSA, and Food Specialist).

Members of the task force should collaborate to identify the specific needs and gaps in the existing training program for each OBS food service job role and design a comprehensive training process that prepares new-hire employees for successful job performance. Objectives for the task force will include:

1. **Create a curriculum addressing the business and food service models and philosophy for Amtrak's F&B services and routes.** Employees who are accountable for providing F&B services and hold the most important roles in delivering on Amtrak's customers' experiences should understand the F&B operation's financial and operational objectives, and how it manages costs, optimizes performance, and shapes positive customer experiences. Consider how best to integrate this training with a team-based approach to managing F&B performance within train crews, routes, and service lines.
2. **Development and implementation of a meal preparation and service curriculum specific to the job roles of chef, LSA food specialist, Café LSA, and service attendant.** The redesigned training process should include hands-on meal preparation training sessions, simulations, and role-playing on stationary equipment. Simulation exercises for dining car new hired employees should consist of a mock meal service where students can familiarize themselves with the product, handling of ingredients, and have a visual and hands on experience with a working dining car. Students would load inventory, prepare food, and provide sit down dining service for their peers under the direction and supervision of dedicated trainers. This would give room for teaching and an introduction of operations.
3. **Develop a curriculum for customer service sales and upselling.** The training process should emphasize the importance of upselling to improve operational performance and enhance customers' experience. This will help employees develop the skills to promote new menu items and encourage customers to upgrade their orders.
4. **Create a process for regular, recurring training for all food service employees.** To ensure the ongoing success of the training process, the task force should also develop a process for existing Chefs, Food Specialists, Service Attendants, and Lead Service Attendants. This will ensure that everyone is aware of cooking procedures, defrosting timelines, serving sizes, shelf life, and presentation standards for dining car business. Café LSA's would be briefed on new items and how to cook, store, and upsell specific products. These training sessions should come in the form of a physical pre-trip training versus a printed notice. Notices are not consistent and do not give sufficient, accurate information to be useful.

Overall, the redesigned training process should be comprehensive, hands-on, and tailored to the specific needs of each job role. The task force may identify additional training needs and opportunities to augment what the FBWG is recommending.

CELEBRATE THE WINS

Celebrate the wins and announce big changes to staff and the public pre-emptively.

RECOMMENDATION

Food & Beverage should partner with Communications and Social Media Teams to celebrate advances for their department. Amtrak should commit to prioritizing press releases and public updates surrounding food and beverage changes, in advance, with robust social media campaigns and timely website updates. Preferably contact will be made with key congressional offices, FRA, DOT, Rail Passengers Association, and other supporting NGOs before the general public so these groups can signal boost the victory lap. Better worker and public opinion require combatting the dissatisfied echo chamber with articulation of clear wins and tangible deliverables.

BACKGROUND

In the last ten years, there has been documented miscommunication with Amtrak and PR/SM providers. It has become commonplace to release partial information without clear timelines, misrepresentation of services provided, and incorrect or misleading photographs to accompany news coming from the Food & Beverage department. Many passengers have voiced confusion or incorrect understanding of the levels of service provided on board due to the confusing presence held by PR/SM teams.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Throughout the tenure of this working group, many passengers have voiced that they are uncertain of what level of service they will receive on board. Most often this is tied to the uncertain timeline of Dining Car restoration, which meals are available on board which trains, and whether or not coach passengers will have access to the dining car.

ANALYSIS / CASE STUDY

Data analysis of “Amtrak Fans” group with 33,000 members, “Amtrak Dining Car Fans” with 2000 members, recipients of the Rail Passengers Weekly Hotline with 21,301 subscribers support, totaling 56,301 of Amtrak’s most loyal customers, there have been daily requests for a timeline for restoration of Dining Car services and coach access. Many passengers are frustrated with the inconsistent news, rumors, and conjecture surrounding this timeline. For those looking to travel during the Summer, the lack of a clear timeline evokes hesitancy in commitment to this mode of travel.

GOALS

- Create a clear communications strategy for Food & Beverage news to be shared externally,
- Address concerns of returning passengers through industry best practices for social and traditional forms of media.



- Revisit and refresh website pages associated with Food & Beverage service on the Amtrak website.

IMPLEMENTATION

As new menu items, on-board experiences, improvements, changes to service models are finalized, F&B teams shall provide fact checked information to SM Teams and affiliated parties mentioned above. Amtrak SM Teams should be prepared to share this information as service changes go live.

TIMELINE

The timeline for this recommendation is dependent upon the life cycles of products and services. We advise that this process be continually improved and summarized reports of the development of above-mentioned goals be delivered to relevant Amtrak Management, F&B staff, and the subcommittees supported within this report quarterly.

LONG-DISTANCE: OPEN DINING CAR TO ALL PASSENGERS

Open the dining car on the national network with a traditional menu and access to the dining car for all passengers regardless of ticketed class.

RECOMMENDATION

This group recommends the immediate restoration of traditional dining service for all passengers aboard all routes longer than 750 miles from end to end.

BACKGROUND

After the passing of the congressional amendment that Amtrak Food and Beverage must run at a profit, the Amtrak Food and Beverage Team developed the Flexible Dining Menu. This has been publicly dismayed by many passengers and is perceived as a microwaved TV dinner. The execution of this menu has been wildly inconsistent since its introduction.

Thanks to the work of non-profit passenger advocacy groups, that amendment has been repealed and Amtrak has the ability to run a better service with more room for growth. As staffing allows restoration of the Traditional Menu with coach passenger access can position Food and Beverage to improve revenue and customer satisfaction scores.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

The service levels onboard long distance routes vary greatly by crew, consist, and location. From tinfoil covered leaking plastic plates served in cardboard boxes to roses on the table with actual silverware and three course meals. This wide variance affects how the passenger perceives their ticket cost and experience on board.

Without restoration of existing rolling stock and preemptive maintenance of newer cafe and dining cars, this volatility of service will continue. Without additional staff and better support for existing staff, the perception of Flexible Dining service will not change.

On routes where Amtrak has restored full-service dining, they have also begun to invite Coach passengers to eat in the dining car when reservations are available. This has been very successful both in terms of Customer satisfaction and revenue generation. For the period of time from March 1st of this year to April 20th the dining cars on the 5 western long distance routes served 11,223 coach customers. This generated an additional \$335,000 in revenue while requiring no additional staff be added. This seems to be a clear signal that continuing the restoration of full service dining and including coach passengers is a positive initiative.



ANALYSIS / CASE STUDY

Data analysis of “Amtrak Fans” group with 33,000 members, “Amtrak Dining Car Fans” with 2000 members, recipients of the Rail Passengers Weekly Hotline with 21,301 subscribers support, totaling 56,301 of Amtrak’s most loyal customers, evidences a fundamental cultural rejection of Flexible Dining. In a pooled search of survey results, the phrase “TV Dinner” was used over 1,250 times in the last year with a negative connotation towards these meals.

Photo analysis provided over 200 photos were submitted for review in which the execution of the Flexible Dining meal presentation looked dismayingly different from the SOP and brand standards presented by Management.

In a survey of Rail Passengers Association members, followers, and supporters, 93% of survey responses answered yes to the question “Do you think Coach Passengers should have access to complete meals on all rides?”

GOALS

- Full restoration of Traditional Dining aboard all long distance routes.
- Elimination of Flexible Dining onboard long distance routes.
- Metrics/KPIs indicating passenger support and positive survey trends from internal (Medalia / Amtrak surveying) and external sources (ACAC / Rail Passengers Association) are provided to relevant members of Congress and produced in public reports quarterly.
- Review of all SOPs and improvement of Flexible Dining service until such a time that service can be eliminated.
- Exemplify diversity of regions through menu creation and execution on board.
- Restoration of coach dining on all long distance routes as quickly as possible.
- Press Release and Social Media coverage of the restoration timeline.

IMPLEMENTATION

As staffing and supply chain issues continue to level out, the implementation and timeline for this process should become self-evident. Amtrak has already begun to return full service dining to very strong positive reactions from passengers, the working group is recommending this be extended to all long distance routes.

INCREASE REVENUE WHILE MEETING NEEDS

Reintroduce Just For You program to increase revenue while meeting needs of economy travellers

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Amtrak reintroduce and sustain a product development process similar to the Just for You meal program. Just for You provided an alternative to coach passengers for meals from dining cars offering traditional dining. The Just for You program was launched in 2015 as an at-your-seat meal for coach passengers traveling on long distance trains in the SW Division. Amtrak generated a total of \$441,000 in the span of 1 year across 3 long distance routes. It is a proven success and would benefit the system in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

Amtrak's Long Distance Service aims to provide a comfortable and convenient travel experience to its passengers. One of the key aspects of this experience is the on board dining options available to passengers. While there are existing meal options available, we believe that a process similar to Just for You can serve to engage staff and create additional revenue options for serving meals to Coach passengers. Just for you was very successful on some routes and failed to flourish on others. The key difference was staff participation and engagement. On those routes where staff was actively engaged in designing the food product for sale and problem solving how to handle the complexity of selling, preparing and serving the product, the program was successful. In those instances where Just for You was a "Top Down" implementation, the program failed to deliver the same sales numbers.

The process for Just for You was:

Staff is challenged to come up with hot food items to sell into coach that met the following criteria:

- ❖ The product must be made of supplies already stocked on board.
- ❖ The cost of the product could be no more than \$5.00.
- ❖ The product must have a sales price of at least \$12.00.
- ❖ The chef and LSA must work together to sell, prepare and serve these items in addition to their regular duties.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Amtrak coach passengers are given two options for meal service. The first option is pre-packaged microwaved meals and snacks from the café. These meals are usually unsubstantial and repetitive.



The second option is the limited availability of a full-service meal in the dining car. These meals, although a great option, can pose as barriers due to the price point. Meals in the dining car are pre-set pricing and can cost from \$20 for breakfast, to \$45 for dinner. Amtrak no longer offers a la carte meal options, which used to be an option for budget conscious passengers.

CASE STUDY

In 2015, Amtrak introduced a supplemental meals program titled “Just for You” (JFY) on the Coast Starlight route. This service was established using pre-existing ingredients from Traditional Dinners, supplemented by a very small amount of support items. JFY meals were served during or prior to the diner opening by the train attendant with help from dining car employees.

As part of a larger employee engagement project designed to improve F&B performance, JFY meals were developed by the food service employees working the Coast Starlight trains. Feedback from OBS staff and passengers guided the design of the meals. The meals were meant to provide a budget friendly alternative as well as a hot and fresh chef prepared meal. Meals were prepurchase at designated times and delivered to the passenger’s seat.

Case studies from the initial launch of this program reflects a success in bringing revenue to the dining car as well as options and customer satisfaction. Through digital surveys, passengers were receptive to this option.

Revenue from this program was in excess of \$400,000, noting that trains were meeting, and surpassing sales goals set forth.

GOALS

- Increase sales and numbers of passengers served.
- Improve CSI scores from coach passengers.
- JFY meals developed and delivered locally by employees serving each long distance route.
- Positive feedback and ratings from flash surveys deployed by OBS staff.
- Develop a crew/route/train level capability for identifying, developing, and piloting new F&B revenue and customer experience initiatives.

IMPLEMENTATION

This assignment aims to develop a pilot project similar to "Just For You" meal service on a single service route.

This pilot project for meal service aims to engage OBS employees and passengers while enhancing the overall passenger experience. The project will test the feasibility of implementing this meal service on a larger scale and gather feedback from passengers and OBS employees to refine the creative process, meal options, delivery process, and training program. The deliverables of this project will be used to evaluate the feasibility of implementing the "Just For You" meal service on a larger scale.

The primary objective of this project is to engage the OBS employees, specifically chefs, food specialists, and LSAs with other specialists, to develop an attractive "at your seat" meal alternative for coach passengers. Additionally, this project aims to test the feasibility of implementing this meal service on a larger scale and to gather feedback from passengers.

SCOPE OF WORK

1. Identify a single service route for the pilot project.
2. Develop and implement an employee engagement strategy to support the project.
3. Launch the pilot project for the "Just for you" meal service on the selected service route.
4. Support employees developing menu items for the "Just For You" meal service that includes a variety of options to cater to different dietary requirements and preferences.
5. Identify the equipment and resources required for the preparation and delivery of the "Just For You" meal service.
6. Develop a training program for OBS employees to ensure they are familiar with the meal options and delivery process.
7. Gather feedback from passengers and OBS employees during the pilot project to refine the meal options, delivery process, and training program.
8. Evaluate the feasibility of implementing the "Just For You" meal service on a larger scale based on the results of the pilot project.

DELIVERABLES

1. A scalable employee engagement strategy for the project.
2. Menu items for the "Just For You" meal service.
3. Equipment and resources required for the preparation and delivery of the "Just For You" meal service.
4. Training and engagement process for OBS employees.
5. Feedback report from passengers and OBS employees.
6. Feasibility report for implementing the "Just For You" meal service on a larger scale.



STATE-SUPPORTED: LOCALIZE PRODUCT ONBOARDING

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Across the country, many state governments have entered into business relationships with Amtrak to operate and maintain intercity passenger rail services. States and regional rail authorities formed under state laws have engaged Amtrak to offer a mode of transportation to achieve important public policy goals such as reducing highway traffic congestion, improving air quality, reducing fuel consumption, and supporting local, regional, and statewide economic development.

The operating agreements between states and Amtrak and the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) define various roles and responsibilities of the parties, including decisions affecting service delivery. As the stewards of taxpayer funding provided to Amtrak, states have great interest in Amtrak service quality and the railroad's ability to meet customer expectations. The provision of a high-quality food and beverage service on state-supported Amtrak routes is an essential part of the rail travel experience. It can be a key driver of ticket revenue, customer satisfaction, and a traveler's decision to use intercity passenger rail service on a recurring basis.

The following recommendations are specifically focused on the provision of food and beverage services on existing and future state-supported routes.

LOCALIZE PRODUCT ONBOARDING AND REMOVAL FOR REGIONAL AND STATE SUPPORTED ROUTES

RECOMMENDATION

With state and regional public agency partners, adopt a formal process to add, evaluate, and change local and regional food and beverage products sold on state-supported Amtrak trains. Empower state and regional public agency partners to identify potential improvements within the service model to better reflect and exemplify their region.

BACKGROUND

There are many regional cuisines across the country that have come to define a place and its people. When offered on state-supported train menus, local and regionally sourced products can help improve route-specific Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) scores, positively influence the branding of a train route, support local and regional economic activity, and lead to incrementally higher ridership and revenue.

Section 3.5.2 of the PRIIA 209 policy was updated and approved by the State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC) in September of 2022 establishing stronger language for states

to determine the food and beverage sold on their state-supported routes. This language is in effect and must be implemented no later than September 30, 2023.

3.5.2. On-Board Services. For routes where the State(s) opt to offer on-board sale of food and beverages, the State(s) will pay the cost of the on-board service agents, of food and beverages sold, of ancillary supplies, and a proportionate share of the cost of the crew base, commissary, and supervision for the service. The State(s) may opt to have food and beverages sold on board the trains for a route and will determine the items to be offered for sale subject to Section 2.3 regarding service customizations. Amtrak will provide information to the States on the costs and revenues likely to result from on-board food and beverage services, including the cost of provisions and supplies, crew base and commissary costs, and operating and maintenance costs of specialized food service cars. Amtrak will make maximum reasonable efforts to accommodate the States' requests, including customized menus. Costs will be charged in the following subcategories according to the charging methods described in Appendix C.

2.3. Service Customizations.

If a State submits a service customization (i.e., a change that differentiates an aspect of service from the standard approach utilized across most or all other routes), Amtrak will provide an estimate of any additional, sole-benefit expense associated with the customization. If the customization is implemented, the State will be responsible for the additional expense. Amtrak will not implement a customization if it deems that the customization will harm another route, and it will provide the State with a written explanation for the decision not to implement the customization. If a customization will benefit all or a majority of routes, Amtrak will seek to implement the change as part of the ongoing improvement to its internal systems, and the customization will not be considered a sole-benefit expense. Service customizations will be reported to the Committee to assure that all States are aware of them and have the opportunity to consider adopting them.

The updated PRIIA language strengthens this recommendation and sets states up to succeed. Amtrak should be held accountable in ensuring state partners have the final sign-off on food and beverage offered for sale on board state-supported routes.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

A few state-supported train routes offer some local food and beverage products, including the Amtrak Downeaster in New England, the Pacific Surfliner in California, and Amtrak Cascades in the Pacific Northwest. Menu items include locally sourced snacks, pastries, salads, sandwiches, craft beers, and wines. However, most state-supported routes only offer top-selling national brands on their menus. As Amtrak has tried to minimize costs, reduce spoilage, and bring consistency to its train menus, local products are often not sold on the trains.

Amtrak and its contracted service provider Aramark are responsible for managing food and beverage activities on most state-supported train routes.¹ This includes working with national producers and distributors to acquire and deliver food and beverage products to commissaries and to the trains, as



well as negotiating pricing and volumes for specific products. State and regional public agencies that direct taxpayer funds to the operation of regional Amtrak trains have often not been part of menu development and have instead left these decisions to Amtrak.

CASE STUDY

In the late 1990s, the states of Washington and Oregon launched a new brand of regional passenger rail service called Amtrak Cascades. An important aspect of the service was the provision of some local products on the menus, including soups, sandwiches, beers, and wines. The states' authority to press for the provision of local products on the menus was and continues to be based on language included in annual operating agreements between the states and Amtrak that address marketing, promotions, and decisions affecting service, as well as through the PRIIA policy cited earlier in this recommendation.

Menus featuring some local products have proven to be very popular with Pacific Northwest travelers, who appreciate the opportunity to enjoy flavorful local brands they are familiar with while riding on the trains.

The states of Washington and Oregon have developed a good business relationship with Amtrak management responsible for food and beverage service on Amtrak Cascades trains and meet regularly to discuss product sales, customer feedback, and other issues related to food and beverage. This relationship is based on a shared understanding of the need to manage costs, increase revenues, and promote a sense of connection between customers and this special travel experience.

GOALS

Below is a list of goals linked to the provision of local and regional food and beverage products on state-supported train routes:

- Increase ridership and revenues on state-supported trains through a positive food and beverage experience that includes the provision of local products.
- Increase route-specific CSI scores for food and beverage service.
- Make the on-boarding process for local and regional food and beverage providers easy to understand.
- Establish route-specific performance evaluation teams comprised of local Amtrak staff and state and regional agency representatives. This team will set performance goals for local products (e.g., sales thresholds over a defined evaluation period) to guide local product placement and/or removal.
- Create parameters in which states can refuse food and beverage options served by Amtrak that are underperforming, misaligned with a state market, or can be substituted by a local product.
- Use CSI / KPI / Survey scores to inform and empower state and regional rail authorities to remove or add items at will.
- Identify opportunities to expand popular local items on state-supported routes to the greater Amtrak market.

- Identify opportunities for customization and creativity for regional and state-supported routes.
- Utilize specific introductory onboarding materials created by the regional or state authority to exemplify specific expectations and iteration of the regional service model.
- Allow room in Amtrak partnerships with state and regional rail authorities to identify capacity for service specific focused Food and Beverage training for each regional model to better exemplify the needs, culture, and candor of that region.

IMPLEMENTATION

To achieve the goals stated above, several steps should be taken to bring aboard and keep local and regional food and beverage products on state-supported trains.

1. **Modify state/Amtrak operating agreement language if needed**

State departments of transportation and regional public transportation agencies enter into operating agreements with Amtrak that govern all aspects of train services to be provided by Amtrak. Each operating agreement is unique. State and regional agencies should review the language in these operating agreements that describe how states and Amtrak will promote and advertise the service, and how the parties will work together to make decisions to improve the service. Food and beverage service is an amenity that should be addressed in the operating agreement to ensure local products can be offered on-board the trains. The operating agreement may also require specific contract language that describes how the parties will work together to make this happen (see examples below).

2. **Educate local vendors**

On the Amtrak Cascades route, state program managers were being approached by local vendors inquiring about placement of their products on Amtrak Cascades trains. In response, Amtrak Seattle and the states of Washington and Oregon developed a document entitled *Amtrak Cascades – Guidelines for Local Product Placement*. Each state-supported route should develop a similar document that is tailored to each route in order to manage the expectations of local vendors.

3. **Form a food and beverage performance evaluation team for the route**

State-supported routes should form a team with representatives from the sponsoring public agencies and Amtrak to discuss the menus, sales data, CSI scores and customer feedback, issues and challenges faced by Amtrak front-line and commissary staff, and potential menu changes. Each team should determine what meeting structure works best for that route, as well as frequency and duration of team meetings.

4. **Agree on a product selection process and performance metrics**

Representatives from the public agencies and Amtrak should develop a route-specific process for selecting local products for placement on the trains. Amtrak representatives should include front-line and commissary staff so transporting, storing, and serving requirements are taken into consideration. Public agency and Amtrak representatives will also perform taste-testing of potential products and identify product preferences. After Amtrak and Aramark (or others, in the case of the Downeaster) have completed negotiations with selected vendors on behalf of the public agencies, the agencies and Amtrak should set sales targets and evaluation timeframes for



new products to determine if the local product should stay on the menu, or potentially be replaced by another local product.

5. Promote local food and beverage products available on the trains

To increase public awareness of the availability of local products on the trains, public agency and Amtrak marketing and communications teams should include messaging about the local products. Potential venues include websites, social media postings, radio and television advertisements, train station signage, and on the menus posted in the food service cars and in customer seatbacks.

6. Actively monitor performance and make adjustments as needed

Food and beverage service on state-supported trains is an amenity intended to attract higher ridership and increase ticket revenues. Public agencies and Amtrak must objectively evaluate all aspects of service delivery, including food and beverage service, to achieve sustained ridership and revenue gains. Close monitoring of local product sales and customer feedback must be an integral part of the work performed by the route's food and beverage performance evaluation team so that menu adjustments can be made to ensure a positive experience for customers purchasing food and beverages on the trains.

7. SAIPRC will establish a Food & Beverage sub-committee of the Commercial Performance Working Group to help states investigate and evaluate local products and processes. The committee will meet with Amtrak Food & Beverage on a quarterly basis to evaluate sales reports, best practices, and changes. The committee will help state partners establish route-level local food provision models.

EXPAND QUALITY CONTROL EFFORTS

Expand Quality Control efforts to improve Customers' Food and Beverage Experiences

RECOMMENDATION

Amtrak will establish a robust QA/QC and accountability program for customer experience in partnership with their state supported railroads.

- Develop a proposed checklist of standards based on Amtrak service standards to develop a program that states and long distance routes can customize based on priorities.
- Develop an Amtrak-funded secret shopper program, deployed on all service lines to gain unbiased insights and opportunities for improvement.
- Initiate a state partner inspection program for state DOT officials to ride and assess the services they fund.
- Managers/Supervisors ride trains with lowest metrics obtained through CSI scores, secret shoppers, and state inspection reports to experience the problems firsthand and develop actionable solutions.
- Include options for penalties and incentives in state operating agreements for situations where Amtrak does not meet or exceeds service standards.

BACKGROUND

Amtrak has created and maintains standards for many elements of the services provided under its Agreements with state partners, including but not limited to the condition of passenger rail equipment, the condition of station facilities, and the conduct of its employees. Amtrak's Service Standards Manual for Train Service and On Board Service employees exists to ensure the delivery of consistent, high-quality service to our passengers by both frontline and supervisory employees. It ties together, in a single reference document, many diverse company policies, procedures and standards that apply to the services Amtrak employees perform. Quality control ensures that the final product reflects these high standards and satisfies the customer's needs.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Amtrak is struggling to hire to appropriate levels, as such employees are drained. The average age of the fleet is 33 years and mechanical issues are seemingly inevitable. These issues, when combined with the pandemic era focus on "flex dining" or prepackaged meals serve to have a negative impact on customer satisfaction.



Table 1 - Score Card Example of State Supported Routes

2022	16 Washington- Roanoke	47 Washington- Newport News	50 Washington- Norfolk	51 Washington- Richmond Main Street
Boarding Station Overall	8.3	8.2	8.3	8.2
On-Time Performance of Train	7.4	7.8	7.8	7.5
Communication About Train Status	7.7	7.8	7.9	7.6
Cleanliness of the Train	8.2	8.3	8.3	8.3
Comfort of Train Ride	8.5	8.5	8.6	8.6
Food and Beverage on the Train	7.2	7.4	7.4	7.4
Wi-Fi on the Train	6.2	6.7	6.8	6
Friendliness of Amtrak Personnel at the Boarding Station	8.6	8.6	8.8	8.6
Friendliness of Amtrak Personnel on the Train	8.6	8.6	8.8	8.7
Bus Pre-Train Overall Satisfaction	-	8.8	8.8	-
Bus Post-Train Overall Satisfaction	-	9	8.4	-

CSI scores for 2022 demonstrating that F&B consistently scored among the lowest measures in customer satisfaction.

CASE STUDY

CTA- In 2007, CTA began sending employees and interns posing as riders to evaluate the system from the passenger perspective. This “mystery shopper” program expanded in 2008 to include regular CTA riders. CTA offered the first 1,000 riders who filled out an evaluation a transit card loaded with one full fare. While the final report and evaluation card are no longer available online, the evaluation included cleanliness, on time performance, and announcements. It's not clear what broader actions CTA took in response to these surveys, but they did target cleaning and maintenance of some stations and stops highlighted by the mystery shoppers.

WMATA- In 2008, the District of Columbia funded a secret shopper program of WMATA's bus and rail system in partnership with the City Year youth corps program. WMATA trained 100 City Year corps members in transit emergencies and procedures and provided them with transit passes. Corps

members filled out weekly surveys about the system, covering topics such as vehicle crowding, cleanliness, vehicle condition, and operator performance. The final report is not available online, but a September 2009 presentation to the Board Customer Services, Operations, and Safety Committee on the program says that a roundtable discussion between the shoppers and WMATA was planned for that fall to discuss their experience riding the system and to help WMATA enhance operations. According to reporting by the Washington Examiner, WMATA began a similar initiative in 2012, hiring the firm Synovate to mystery shop its system. However, WMATA declined to share the results of this mystery shopper program.

The Springfield, MA intercity bus company Peter Pan Bus Lines, uses a mystery shopper program to evaluate their buses and drivers on a regular basis. The company is upfront with drivers about what criteria they are evaluated on but are not aware of who the evaluators are. Peter Pan has a network of riders who hold commercial driver's licenses so that they are qualified to assess proper driver behavior in addition to general customer experience. The riders evaluate 80% of drivers each year and the remaining drivers are prioritized for assessment on the next year.

Transport for Wales uses a mystery shopper program with the objective of using the results to improve the quality of their rail service. An outside contractor is brought in to conduct the program with 50 surveys being conducted every four-week period. The survey asked mystery shoppers to rate their overall impressions with station and train cleanliness, satisfaction, and staff helpfulness. Included within the survey is on time departures, delays, effective communication of information at station and on the train through announcements and digital displays, and the ability to access WiFi on board. The surveys try to capture the full experience for riders. The results of these surveys are published publicly by Transport for Wales after each period.

The New York State Department of Transportation conducts QA/QC inspections continuously with multiple inspections per month. These inspections are conducted by an NYSDOT staff member who receives credentials from Amtrak enabling them to ride the train free of charge. The inspector fills out a checklist which covers aspects of the customer experience such as employee conduct, equipment cleanliness, operations, and food and beverage service. The checklist for food and beverage includes the communication of information regarding the Café, LSA customer service, food quality and stock, and whether signage related to Taste of NY were visible and in good condition. Major instances where their service does not reach the agreed standards can result in NYSDOT providing Amtrak with a notice of the violation. Amtrak can then conduct an internal investigation and then decide to concur or dispute the incident. These violations can result in a financial penalty. More minor instances are resolved at a lower level, typically the inspector will communicate with the mechanical supervision at the yards, the commissary, or the train crews to inform them of the incident and request it be fixed. The program also provides Amtrak staff with letters of appreciation in situations where staff have gone above and beyond in performing their duties.

GOALS

Quality control enables organizations to accurately measure their customer experience across all touchpoints. It provides the data and actionable insights needed to improve the overall experience



and brand performance. Secret shopping focuses on interaction and employee engagement with valued customers. It enhances brand sentiment by nurturing customer experiences focused on ease of interaction, reduced customer effort, and maximizing long-term satisfaction. Most importantly, it allows companies to create people-centric customer experiences by evaluating the authenticity of the service, pinpointing areas of improvement, and cultivating change.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Jointly with the states, develop methodological approach to utilizing secret shoppers in evaluating food and beverage offered. Consider frequency and scale of program, objectives, evaluation measures, and how results will be used to continuously improve service.
- States will review current operating agreements with Amtrak for changes to reflect new food and beverage supplemental standards.
- Create a consistent set of criteria to measure customer experience over time that will be meaningful in determining food and beverages offered and service provided.
 - Expand CSI to include measures beyond “food and beverage on the train,”
 - Create score minimums to include in the operating agreement. Example: 2022 CSI scores for VA routes, showing highest to lowest scores.
- Provide regular evaluations of rider experience using secret shoppers on Amtrak routes to states and Amtrak food and beverage committee.
- Use results of secret shopper evaluations to address quality and customer satisfaction issues tied back to measures from the Amtrak/State Partner operating agreement.
- On a bi-annual basis, convene Amtrak and State Partners to assess results of the secret shopper program to inform delivery of service, service operating procedures and incentives/penalties.

NEC/ACELA: REVITALIZE ACELA

RECOMMENDATION

Revitalize the standard of excellence for Acela and for Acela First Class Service as the best example of first-class travel in the US.

BACKGROUND

Acela is the premier product in Amtrak's fleet and Acela First Class is the train's highest-level service. The Acela fleet is over 20 years old and is scheduled for replacement. In anticipation of the transition to new equipment, it is important to sustain the level of service passengers expect when booking first-class travel.

Acela service offers obvious advantages over its airline competitors in the NEC (Northeast Corridor), offering a more relaxed and comfortable experience with fewer crowds, shorter boarding times, and more spacious seating compared to first-class services on major airlines. Food and beverage services are a significant consideration in customers' decisions about their travel options.

Amtrak will invariably see growth on congested traffic corridors between pairs of major cities regionally in the United States. Amtrak should use Acela and Acela first class as the model for future growth in these instances where high speed regional rail develops. Having a model that can be readily deployed that provides excellent customer service, economic growth and Food and Beverage Excellence will help States and local governments to more readily want to invest with Amtrak.

Acela and the NEC have the highest concentration of business travellers / commuters in the Amtrak network. As congestion continues to increase along major arterial travel routes in the country Amtrak should see an increase in demand for business and first-class travel.

Amtrak leadership is aware of the need to improve the experience and is in the process of implementing some very positive changes.

CURRENT CONDITIONS


The current F&B offering is based on three different menu rotations, each one on a 3-week cycle, that are updated seasonally to ensure a variety of options. Food is prepared and plated at Fresh Creative Cuisine in Baltimore and shipped to Amtrak's commissary in WAS, NY, BOS for loading on board. Detailed food preparation instructions are provided to the on board staff to ensure good quality and presentation are offered consistently.

During FY2022 Amtrak introduced a new First Class customer survey to gather specific feedback about the menu items (quality, presentation, and portion size) and the service provided by the onboard staff. This new tool provides a trove of valuable information about food preparation, the quality of the meals provided by our vendor and about our service procedure. The information has been utilized to optimize the menu, introducing popular options in each menu, removing poor scoring options, and improving portion size and quality of specific dishes.




Plate level CSI data

Table 2 - First Class Menu Ratings

 Acela First Class Menu Ratings					
	Food Quality	Presentation	Portion Size	Expectations Met	Responses
C	7.2	7.8	8.1	7.9	606
	Food Quality	Presentation	Portion Size	Expectations Met	Responses
Cheese & Fruit Plate	7.6	8.1	8.1	8.1	125
Chilled Salmon	8.2	8.2	8.2	8.6	87
Fresh Seasonal Fruit Plate	6.9	7.6	7.6	7.5	83
Italian Stuffed Chicken Breast	6.4	7.1	8.2	7.4	119
Spinach Florentine Tart	6.7	8.1	8.2	7.8	50
Stuffed French Toast	7.2	7.6	8.0	8.0	40
Vegan Rigatoni Bolognese	8.1	8.2	8.6	8.3	40

Special attention has been taken to improving the quality of those dishes that are common across the menus, like the fresh fruit plate and the cheese plate.

Table 3 - Acela First Class menu Ratings

 Acela First Class Menu Ratings					
	Food Quality	Presentation	Portion Size	Expectations Met	Responses
A	7.6	7.9	8.0	8.1	604
	Food Quality	Presentation	Portion Size	Expectations Met	Responses
Boneless Short Rib	7.5	7.6	8.2	8.2	141
Butternut Squash and Swiss Chard Lasagna	7.2	7.4	8.4	7.7	69
Cheese & Fruit Plate	8.0	8.4	8.2	8.4	99
French Omelet	7.4	7.8	7.7	8.1	39
Fresh Seasonal Fruit Plate	8.1	8.3	8.2	8.2	64
Greek Mezze Plate	7.6	7.8	7.5	8.1	119
Monte Cristo Sandwich	8.0	8.0	7.9	8.5	28

For the upcoming summer menu Amtrak established a partnership with the Starr Restaurant group. Stephen Starr is a renowned restaurateur on the East Coast, owning a number of restaurants in Philly, NYC and DC. He is also an Acela FC rider. Starting May 19, each of our Acela FC menus will feature one food item that comes directly off the menu of one of his restaurants. Through this initiative Amtrak aims to elevate the Acela FC experience with a clear commitment to improving our F&B offerings and providing a true First-Class experience.

To improve the quality of service, Amtrak has recently launched a new series of “focus-on” notices that provide detailed instruction for front line employees and their managers on how to execute specific service steps. Moreover, a dedicated customer service training is being developed with HR leveraging the program that used to be in place prior to the pandemic and adding a specific section for First Class service.

CURRENT CONDITIONS – EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK

There are many regular customers of the service and one of their chief complaints is the lack of options in the menu items. For example, the charcuterie platter is very popular, but the most frequent riders/customers often ask when Amtrak will make some substitutions on the cheeses and other items served. Currently, there are three cycles - three breakfast and lunch/dinner cycles. During breakfasts, the same fruit platter is offered on all three breakfast cycles and regular customers are frequently requesting something new or different. On the lunch/dinner cycles, Amtrak offers its first-class passengers the same cheese & fruit platter as well as the same dessert.

Acela First Class LSA's are suggesting changes to the food service and to maintenance items affecting food service and customer experience.

FOOD RECOMMENDATION

- Upgrade the menu to be more in line with the experience that travelers expect and deserve. This includes increasing the variety of fresh items so that regular passengers have options. Increase the quality of items served to match the expectation of First Class travelers.
- Upgrade the level of service delivery skills on the part of front-line employees. Provide training and coaching that supports the employees desire to deliver world class service to passengers.
- Put in place sales metrics and regular business performance conversations so employees understand the business and their role in sustaining and improving its' success.

In the interim period before the new fleet is delivered the First Class Car should be updated / maintained to have the appearance of a First Car.

MAINTENANCE RECOMMENDATION

- Regular maintenance schedules should be increased and made more rigorous. Business and First Class travelers expect their surroundings to be well maintained and clean. To that end



regular cleaning of the First Class dining car should be increased to include appearance items such as the windows cleaned inside and out, carpets and floors cleaned or shampooed on a more regular basis.

- Replacement or refurbishment of worn items to include draperies, seat fabrics and divisive drapes.
- Equipment should be well cleaned and maintained to be in working order at all times.

GOALS

- Quality dining reflected by CSI scores at 9 or above.
- Employees well trained and informed.
- Professional and engaged front lines.
- Clear roles and responsibilities defined in all positions.
- Timely communication flow regarding issues, opportunities, and success.
- Engaged middle and upper management.
- Equipment available and functioning.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Employees receive training as outlined in the OBS training recommendation. Amtrak has started training activities for the NEC / Acela staff, we would recommend continuation of this training and increasing the timeline if possible.
- Detailed surveys providing actionable feedback have been implemented for the First Class dining passengers. We would recommend that this is adopted as a best practice across Amtrak. Additionally, this data should be used with front line staff to understand both the performance of plate level CSI data, and additionally key business performance metrics for their trains.
- Evaluate partnership with the Starr Restaurant group after implementation to further elevate the menu and continue if it has a positive impact on CSI scores.
- Engage all On Board Staff prior to new menu launch to train on new food items and help make the new product introduction maximally successful.
- Evaluate Introduction of breakfast pastries baked fresh daily in WAS, NY, Bos bakeries, modify based on CSI data and consider expansion to additional routes if successful.
- Continue push to eliminate disposable service-ware.
- Analyze data collected over last 6 months, hold focus groups and identify key action to further improve the First Class experience as a whole.

TIMELINE

This implementation should take priority – new menu is being released in May.

The entire working group agreed that continued collaboration, beyond the transmittal of this document, could be beneficial. Despite lengthy discussion, the group did not come to agreement regarding a recommendation for next steps. We have included two proposed recommendations below. One recommendation, calling for the “Creation of a Modernized Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee,” was thoroughly debated by the team, but ultimately the working group could not reach consensus. As such, it is included with the significant caveat that the entire group does not support this recommendation. Amtrak offered an alternative recommendation which also was the subject of group discussion, and it is also included below titled “Amtrak Food and Beverage Advisory Committee.”



CREATION OF A MODERNIZED AMTRAK CUSTOMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION

This working group recommends the immediate restoration of the Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee (ACAC) with a dedicated funding stream of \$70,000 USD annually to be coordinated and operated by Rail Passengers Association in accordance with the responsibilities of the pre-pandemic ACAC and additional responsibilities as identified within this report.

BACKGROUND

For 20 years, in partnership with Amtrak and under the directorship of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (which is now known as the Rail Passengers Association), the Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee grew into a premier customer-service focused volunteer organization representing the traveling public. The ACAC gave Amtrak critical “Voice of the Customer” feedback, and many of the most popular and well-known amenities today began as ACAC initiatives – the idea of a “Quiet Car,” for example, being only one.

ACAC responded to Amtrak's requests by participating in food-service menu development, producing a professional-quality data-driven checked-baggage efficiency analysis systemwide, and creating a training curriculum for on-board employees in how best to work with disabled and special needs passengers.

ACAC members were frequent and incognito Amtrak riders who observed passenger and employee interactions and provided those observations to Amtrak through mobile-enabled Trip Reports each month. These observations led to recommendations on how Amtrak could meet the everyday needs of its passengers in the short-term and strategically plan for service improvements and enhancements to the customer experience in the long-term.

The Rail Passengers Association selected the membership and directed the activities of the Committee to ensure that the membership broadly represented regular fare-paying passengers and not “railfans,” and took on many multi-month projects specifically to answer questions Amtrak posed to the ACAC. All of this work was carried out for roughly half the cost of a single full-time employee.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

The ACAC's operations were halted early in the pandemic, and Amtrak has not produced a clear plan for its reinstatement. With the significant funding secured through IIJA/BIL, it is essential to assess capacity and allocate direct funding for the committee. Reestablishing this advisory committee led by skilled passenger advocates and stakeholders representing diverse passenger demographics can alleviate various Amtrak departmental responsibilities and eliminate confirmation bias found in an exclusively internal auditing and surveying process.

By serving as a preliminary reporting body, a modernized ACAC can support existing processes with strong performance metrics, serve as a point of accountability and enforce transparency for smaller

subcommittees as the contents of these recommendation are enacted. After meeting with stakeholders at Amtrak who will serve as the primary points of interaction, contact, and reporting for the new ACAC, the need for clear organizational hierarchy and focused meeting structure is apparent. Allowing this Committee to spearhead efforts made by the additional subcommittees recommended within this report, its members will have the resources to analyze external feedback beyond the scope of traditional sources of data capture utilized by Amtrak.

A multifaceted agile solution led by the staff of Rail Passengers Association can lead to improvement of on-board services as requested by Congress and taxpayers via immediate reinstatement of the ACAC. The Rail Passengers Association predates the existence of Amtrak and effectively advocated to secure the present and future of our nation's passenger rail provider. For over 50 years Rail Passengers Association staff and supporters have advocated for committed funding sources, improved on-board services, better connectivity, and provided research to support the expansion of passenger rail across the entire United States. This bipartisan organization employs a uniquely skilled staff committed to pursuance of a better National Network via transparent and effective leadership. Under their direction, the ACAC will be a group primarily committed to serve the passenger and our taxpaying public who rely on Amtrak services.

GOALS

- Restoration of a funded ACAC model to be led by Rail Passengers Association staff to support passenger advocates committed to accomplish the following:
 - Consideration of and time dedicated to the various needs of national, regional, state-supported routes and their operators and the impact these practices have on the passenger,
 - Support future projects, pilots, and advisory endeavors for the benefit of the passenger and in support of continued Food & Beverage Enhancement,
 - Monitor Performance Improvement Plans
 - Capture passenger feedback for demographics lacking representation via conventional surveying data,
 - Support the development of the Passengers Bill of Rights,
 - Highlight and research means of support for FBWG recommendations,
 - Review and champion adherence to the FBWG recommendations via management of subcommittees recommended in this report,
 - Provide “secret shopper” functions including anonymous feedback, surveying, monitoring execution of on board SOPs and,
 - Analyze the UX of website and app onboard, at stations, and by remote users,
- Commitment of a 5-10 year plan to empower the actualization of the ACAC strategic vision and support best practices for passenger service and,
- Establish cadence for Congressional reporting and hearings as needed to evidence increase in customer satisfaction and consistency in the workplace.
- Receive reports from the Food & Beverage Advisory Committee, SAIPRC committee, Employee Improvement Committee to better inform best practices.



- Provide Amtrak internal teams with updates as needed to inform Spokesperson, Social Media, Travel, Vacation, Disability, and Customer Service roles to support growth of ridership.

IMPLEMENTATION

We recommend immediate prioritization and implementation. Relevant staff of Rail Passengers Association will provide a leadership strategy, work plan, trajectory, and cadence of quarterly functions as the preliminary passenger advocacy group key in the foundation, improvement, and continued development of Amtrak.

The committee should be formed of no more than 11 members including:

- 2 members of Rail Passengers Association staff,
- 3 labor representatives from Amtrak on board service employee unions,
- 1 professional non-Amtrak disability advocate,
- 3 additionally qualified non-Amtrak members with respect for DEI best practices,
- 1 member of Amtrak management responsible for the on-board experience and,
- 1 member of an additional Amtrak team with a scope of work related to the actuation of ACAC goals.

The committee should meet quarterly to review internal surveying metrics, external surveying metrics, timelines related to F&B / OBS improvement parameters, and a status check on benchmarks set based on holistic passenger and worker feedback as received by all invested parties.

TIMELINE

A fully developed and funded ACAC should be prepared to resume responsibilities and reporting no later than the end of this calendar year. Rail Passengers Association will hold the responsibility of appointing the qualified members who are not recognized as Amtrak staff in the above description. The first meeting of the reformed ACAC shall be held no later than 90 days after Amtrak finalizes and submits their response to this report. At the time of restoration, a press release containing the overall objectives will be released to the public and contact will be made with Congressional Offices interested in the development of the recommendation.

After 5 years, a full review of ACAC performance will be produced by Rail Passengers Association and made available to Congressional stakeholders transparently reflecting the value of the Committee and provide evidence of a return on this investment. In this 5 year report, the ACAC will provide an informed statement on the post-FBWG service climate and consult with Amtrak management as to how the ACAC will continue to support continued growth in passenger satisfaction as aligned with expansion of services models, new routes, and new technology is manifested by various Amtrak teams.

AMTRAK FOOD AND BEVERAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION

The working group recommends that following transmittal of its report to Congress, a similar group of stakeholders be organized to meet at a regular cadence with Amtrak Food and Beverage leadership to review food and beverage operating results and performance and provide input to the company on future issues regarding Amtrak food and beverage services. This new food and beverage advisory group should reflect the views of current and future customers, as well as other relevant stakeholders such as states and food and beverage employee labor organizations. This new advisory committee should not only consider the topics memorialized in the Food & Beverage Working Group's 2023 report and Amtrak's subsequent responses, but also provide further insight and feedback addressing future Amtrak decisions related to food and beverage services that were not contemplated by the initial working group.

This proposed Committee will build upon the insights derived from Amtrak's extensive consumer surveys while also allowing relevant stakeholders to engage senior Food and Beverage leadership directly. Relevant stakeholders include states, the Rail Passengers' Association, union members working in positions providing food and beverage service for Amtrak, and Amtrak food and beverage senior leadership.



SECTION 2

LONGER TERM RECOMMENDATION FOR F&B PLANNING

The FBWG's Future Focus Team has a strong belief that Amtrak's future growth will occur in alignment to the growth of the nation's population. While this may seem out of scope for a report on Food and Beverage, the team believes that understanding future growth patterns can help Amtrak make better long-term decisions and preparations to continue to deliver excellence in Food and Beverage.

This section offers a recommendation from a longer-term perspective and considers the FRA's planned expansions for passenger rail. As Amtrak plans to partner with states and regional coalitions to support these new routes, their collaboration should include planning to support F&B services on new service lines.

FUTURE OF PASSENGER RAIL IN AMERICA

Megaregions: Emerging Opportunities and trends

Addressing America's aging infrastructure and transportation network is crucial to accommodate our growing population, demonstrate leadership in sustainability, and support an economy focused on major metropolitan areas and their surrounding regions. One key strategy to achieve this is capitalizing on the United States' unparalleled railway infrastructure, the world's largest by mileage. By expanding a network of low-carbon, high-capacity intercity passenger rail routes, we can significantly enhance our economy, improve communities, and create opportunities for travelers and workers alike.

Amtrak has collaborated with multiple states to operate short-distance corridor services, connecting major metropolitan areas with nearby cities and towns over routes of fewer than 500 miles. Today, Amtrak has seventeen state partners supporting these services. To accelerate the growth of this network, Amtrak proposed increasing federal funding and improving key statutory provisions to expand services to promising corridors nationwide.

At the same time over the past fifty years, the U.S. population has grown by nearly 130 million people, with much of that growth concentrated in megaregions in the Sunbelt and West, where Amtrak currently offers limited service. Texas and Florida, the nation's second and third most populous states, have a combined population of just over 50 million but are served by only six Amtrak trains, some of which do not operate daily. In contrast, the Northeast Corridor (NEC) has over 100 weekday Amtrak trains. Major cities such as Houston, Phoenix, Atlanta, Denver, Cleveland, and Cincinnati have limited or inconvenient Amtrak service, presenting opportunities for improved regional mobility with proper investment.

The passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, provided the critical funding necessary to drive this expansion plan, focusing on serving cities across America that have experienced population growth

but lack railway infrastructure to service them. Moreover, a comprehensive strategy to coordinate this railway infrastructure that recognizes demographic and population trends is critical to ensure the efficient allocation of resources.

A critical aspect of this expansion plan involves identifying opportunities within America's "megaregions," which are large, interconnected urban areas with their surrounding rural communities. Amtrak, in partnership with the federal government, states, local leaders, and host railroads, has identified city pairs within these megaregions that exhibit potential for successful intercity passenger rail corridors. This focus on megaregions is essential to maximizing the impact of our rail network in meeting the needs of the population and the economy.

The concept of megaregions, or large interconnected regions that span multiple states and metropolitan areas, has become increasingly relevant in the United States in recent years. These megaregions are characterized by high levels of economic activity and population growth and are considered to be key drivers of the country's economic competitiveness and prosperity.

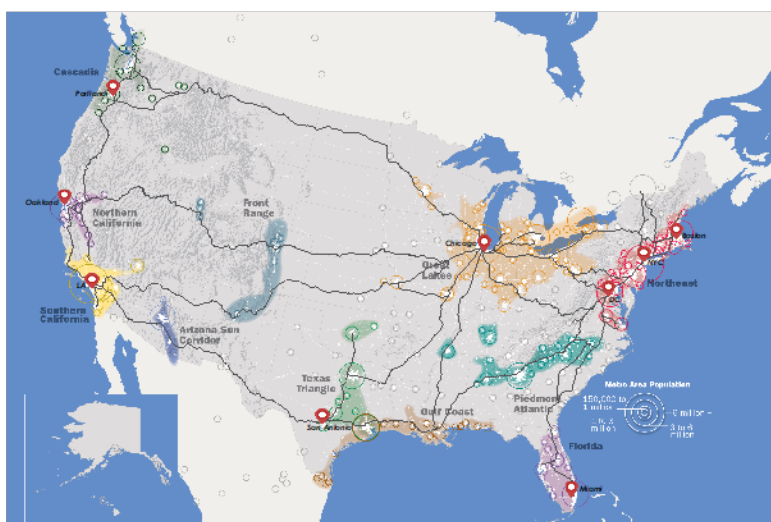


Figure 21 – Megaregions

As these megaregions have grown and evolved, there has been a growing need for more efficient and sustainable transportation options to connect the various cities and communities within them. Passenger rail is seen as a particularly important mode of transportation for addressing this need, as



it can provide a cost-effective and efficient way to move large numbers of people over long distances.

Passenger rail can also help to reduce congestion on highways, at airports and can serve as an important transportation option for communities that are not well-served by other modes of transportation. Additionally, passenger rail can play a key role in supporting economic development and job creation, by connecting businesses and communities, and serving as a catalyst for investment in areas along the rail lines.

Table 4 - Benefits from Corridor Development

	Annual User and External Benefits (2035)	Annual Economic Activity Generated by Operations (2035)	Annual Service Driven Employment (2035)	Economic Activity Generated by Additional Capital Investments (2021-2035)	Jobs Supported by Additional Capital Investments (Person-years) (2021-2035)
Existing Network	\$2.4 billion	\$9.3 billion	36,000	N/A	N/A
Network Vision	\$3.5 billion	\$16.2 billion	62,000	\$195 billion	616,000
Net Benefit of Network Vision	\$1.1 billion annually	\$6.9 billion annually	26,000 annually	\$195 billion	616,000 through 2035

Note: All monetary values in 2020 dollars. Source: Steer, Amtrak National Network Plan - Economic Impact Analysis, May 2021

As a result, many experts and policymakers argue that investing in passenger rail is crucial to meeting the transportation needs of growing megaregions in the United States and ensuring the continued economic competitiveness and prosperity of the country.

In some markets, such as the NEC and its connecting corridors, California, the Pacific Northwest, and the Midwest, intercity passenger rail is already a vital component of the national multimodal transportation network. However, in other parts of the U.S., significant population growth, travel demand, demographic shifts, congestion, and changing travel preferences reveal that Amtrak's legacy route network of once-a-day services is insufficient to meet the evolving needs of the traveling public. By concentrating on megaregions, Amtrak can ensure a more effective, sustainable, and economically viable rail network for the future, while addressing the gaps in service for rapidly growing areas such as the Sunbelt and West.

America's growth continues into the third decade of the 21st century with continued sustained growth of its metropolitan regions and robust economic growth. Its urbanization continues to rise as Americans continue to steadily move towards major metropolitan regions and their surrounding cities and towns that fuel a steadily increasing demand for robust modern 21st century transportation infrastructure.

Amtrak's emerging "Megaregions" are vital areas of growth in the coming decades that will be vital for Amtrak to invest its resources and build partnerships with. Already, Amtrak has designated select "Megaregions" into its operations, such as the Northeast Corridor (NEC). In the coming years and

decades, Amtrak may create additional regional designations that closely mirror megaregions in the United States.

AMTRAK'S CORRIDOR VISION

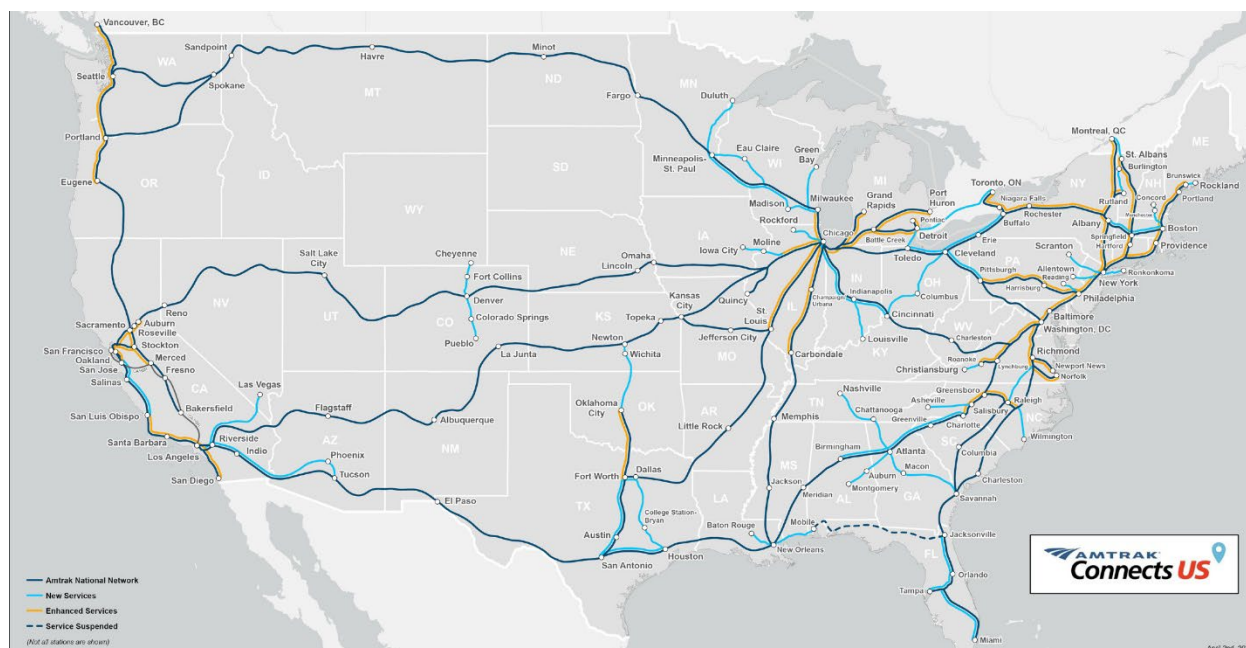


Figure 22 - Amtrak's Corridor Vision

In this report, we have laid out recommendations related to enhancing Amtrak's Food and Beverage infrastructure, policy, and investments. These recommendations complement Amtrak's megaregion-focused strategies. Food and Beverage plays a crucial role in realizing this vision by reinvigorating the passenger experience, for younger generations and for a new customer base. An effective Food and Beverage infrastructure will also foster collaboration between Amtrak and its business partners, offering new transportation options for passengers, and fostering a new dynamic transportation economy.

IMPLICATIONS OF MEGAREGIONS AND FUTURE TECHNOLOGIES

Amtrak's long-term planning for future Food & Beverage service should consider innovations in partnerships, food provisioning processes, and food service. Several areas of opportunity include:



STATE SPONSORED EXPANSION

Amtrak should commit renewed resources to the development of state sponsored partnerships. It seems clear that growth of the rail infrastructure will occur along the path of these megaregions. Private companies are already investing billions of dollars in private railroads based on these demographic models. In order for Amtrak to effectively expand they will need to improve upon their model of collaborating with the States to support growth.

FRA's expansion plans are an opportunity for Amtrak to work with potential state partners to develop models for F&B support on future routes.

COMMISSARY RETHINK

Part of the Amtrak Food and Beverage infrastructure that does not get much examination is the commissary model. Amtrak owns or leases 12 commissaries where much of their on board inventory is stored. Amtrak pays for these facilities, but those costs are difficult to find in the financials or in the Food and Beverage cost models. Just in time logistics have gotten very good in the world. It is worth the effort to charter a team to consider a complete rethink of how Amtrak handles the logistics of getting food, beverages and supplies to the trains.

FUTURE TECHNOLOGIES

The Future Focus team identified many trends that could have a positive impact on the rail traveling public. In order to stay relevant with the changing demands of younger passengers, Amtrak must begin to prepare the infrastructure and thinking to adopt these innovative new alternatives.

FULLY AUTONOMOUS "MINI MART" STYLE MARKETS (NO ATTENDANTS REQUIRED).

- Fully autonomous "mini mart" style markets are revolutionizing the retail landscape by providing a seamless, convenient, and contactless shopping experience. These innovative stores utilize cutting-edge technology, such as AI-powered inventory management, facial recognition, and computer vision, to offer a cashier-less and attendant-free shopping environment. This not only eliminates the need for queues and traditional checkouts but also allows customers to shop at their own pace, 24/7.
- These mini marts are designed to cater to a wide range of consumer needs, stocking everything from fresh produce and grocery items to household essentials and pre-packaged meals. By combining the best aspects of brick-and-mortar stores with the efficiency and convenience of e-commerce, autonomous mini marts provide a unique and personalized shopping experience. Their smart inventory systems ensure that products are always in stock and fresh, while the data-driven insights help optimize the product selection based on local preferences and trends.
- Integration of fully autonomous "mini marts" into Amtrak Stations is an easy step, as these autonomous "mini marts" already operate in the retail environment as well as airports. Integration in the future of fully autonomous "mini marts" into a train cart could drastically streamline the customer food and beverage experience and make Amtrak's train infrastructure be on the forefront of innovation in customer experience.

ORDER FROM SEAT TECHNOLOGY.

- Order-from-seat technology is a game-changing innovation that elevates customer experience in various settings, such as movie theaters, stadiums, and public transportation. This technology allows patrons to use their smartphones or tablets to browse menus, place orders, and make payments directly from their seats, eliminating the need to wait in long queues or leave their seats to make a purchase. With user-friendly apps and touch-screen interfaces, this technology offers a seamless, hassle-free ordering process for both customers and service providers.
- By incorporating order-from-seat technology, Amtrak can improve operational efficiency, reduce staff workload, and enhance customer satisfaction. The technology is already established, and utilized in Asian rail companies, as mentioned in the digital recommendation.
- Ultimately, order-from-seat technology is a valuable addition to train passengers, enabling a more enjoyable and convenient experience for customers while optimizing business operations.

DELIVERY TO SEAT SERVICE.

- Delivery-to-seat service is an innovative approach that enhances the customer experience in various venues, such as cinemas, sports arenas, and concert halls. This service allows patrons to order food, beverages, or merchandise directly from their seats and have it delivered to them, ensuring convenience, comfort, and minimal disruption to their event enjoyment.
- By utilizing easy-to-use mobile apps or touchscreen ordering systems, customers can place their orders without the hassle of standing in long lines.
- Implementing delivery-to-seat service not only elevates customer satisfaction but also increases revenue potential for Amtrak. With the added convenience of ordering from their seats, patrons would be more likely to make purchases and spend more during their ride. Moreover, this service model enables better inventory management, reduces congestion at concession stands, and supports a more efficient workflow for staff. Ultimately, delivery-to-seat service is a win-win solution for businesses and customers alike, creating a more enjoyable and streamlined experience for all.

PREORDERING FOOD AS PART OF INITIAL RESERVATION PROCESS.

- Preordering food as part of the initial reservation process is an innovative approach to streamlining customer experience in various hospitality settings, such as restaurants, hotels, and events. By allowing guests to select their meals in advance, Amtrak can better anticipate demand, manage inventory, and ensure that specific dietary needs or preferences are met. This proactive approach not only enhances the overall dining experience but also helps reduce food waste and optimize kitchen operations.
- Incorporating food preordering into the reservation process is a valuable addition to any hospitality service, as it offers numerous benefits for both customers and businesses. Guests can enjoy a more personalized and stress-free dining experience, knowing that their



preferences have been taken into account and their meals will be prepared accordingly. Meanwhile, businesses can better allocate resources, improve staff efficiency, and ensure customer satisfaction. Ultimately, preordering food as part of the initial reservation process is a strategic move that elevates the quality of service and creates a memorable experience for guests.

CASHLESS OPERATIONS.

- Cashless operations are an increasingly popular approach in today's fast-paced, technology-driven world, offering numerous benefits for both customers and businesses alike. By transitioning to a cashless payment model, businesses can streamline transactions, reduce wait times, and improve overall efficiency. This modern payment method supports contactless transactions through credit/debit cards, mobile wallets, or digital payment apps, providing a safe and convenient alternative to handling physical cash.
- Adopting cashless operations not only enhances the customer experience by offering faster and more secure payment options, but it also simplifies financial management for businesses. With the elimination of cash handling, businesses can reduce the risk of theft, save on operational costs, and access real-time data for better financial tracking and decision-making. Furthermore, cashless transactions generate valuable insights into customer behavior and preferences, enabling businesses to tailor their offerings and marketing strategies accordingly. In summary, transitioning to cashless operations is a strategic move that fosters a more efficient, secure, and customer-centric environment at Amtrak.

ROBOTIC FOOD AND BEVERAGE DELIVERY.

- Robotic delivery of food and beverage is an innovative solution that is transforming the way businesses handle order fulfillment and customer service. By utilizing advanced robotics and autonomous navigation technology, these delivery systems can efficiently transport orders to customers in various settings, such as restaurants, hotels, and offices. With their ability to navigate complex environments and avoid obstacles, robotic delivery systems ensure a smooth and efficient process while minimizing human intervention.
- Implementing robotic delivery for food and beverage on Amtrak trains offers several advantages, including increased operational efficiency, reduced labor costs, and enhanced customer experience. These autonomous systems can work around the clock without fatigue, ensuring consistent service quality and faster delivery times. Moreover, they minimize the need for human contact, promoting hygiene and safety in food handling. By embracing this cutting-edge technology, Amtrak can streamline their operations, and create a unique and memorable experience for their customers.

APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF TERMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND ACRONYMS

CSI – Amtrak’s Customer Service Index - is based on surveys conducted among Amtrak passengers, and it measures various aspects of the customer experience, such as onboard service, station facilities, train cleanliness, and overall satisfaction

CX – Customer experience. It refers to the overall perception or impression a customer has of a brand or organization based on their interactions and experiences with it.

F&B – Food & Beverage service

FBWG – Food and Beverage Working Group

IIJA-Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

IT – Information Technology

LD – Amtrak’s Long Distance service

NEC- Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor is a heavily traveled rail route that stretches over 450 miles from Boston, Massachusetts, to Washington, D.C. The NEC serves some of the largest metropolitan areas in the United States, including Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., and carries millions of passengers every year.

NNEPRA - Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority. NNEPRA is responsible for managing the Amtrak Downeaster, a passenger rail service that operates between Boston, Massachusetts, and Brunswick, Maine, with several stops in between.

NRPC - National Railroad Passenger Corporation - Amtrak

OBS – On Board Services at Amtrak. It is a department responsible for providing a variety of services to passengers while they are on board Amtrak trains. These services include food and beverage service, luggage assistance, and other amenities to make the travel experience comfortable and enjoyable for passengers

PAR - Periodic Automatic Replenishment - The PAR method involves setting a minimum level of inventory for each product or item and automatically restocking when inventory levels fall below that minimum threshold.

POS – Point of Sale, refers to the “cash register” transaction equipment used for food service

RPA - Rail Passengers Association is a non-profit organization that advocates for the expansion and improvement of passenger rail service in the United States.

SAIPRC - The State-Amtrak Intercity Passenger Rail Committee (SAIPRC) is a multi-agency body comprised of Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Administration, and 20 states agencies across 17 states responsible for funding 28 Amtrak routes.

SKU - stands for Stock Keeping Unit and is a unique identifier used to track inventory within a business

SPRC – States for Passenger Rail Coalition - SPRC’s Mission is to promote the development, implementation, and expansion of Intercity Passenger Rail as part of an integrated national transportation network

UX – User experience encompasses all aspects of the end-user’s interaction with the company, its services, and its products.

VRPA - Virginia Railway Passenger Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and improving passenger rail service in Virginia and the surrounding region.



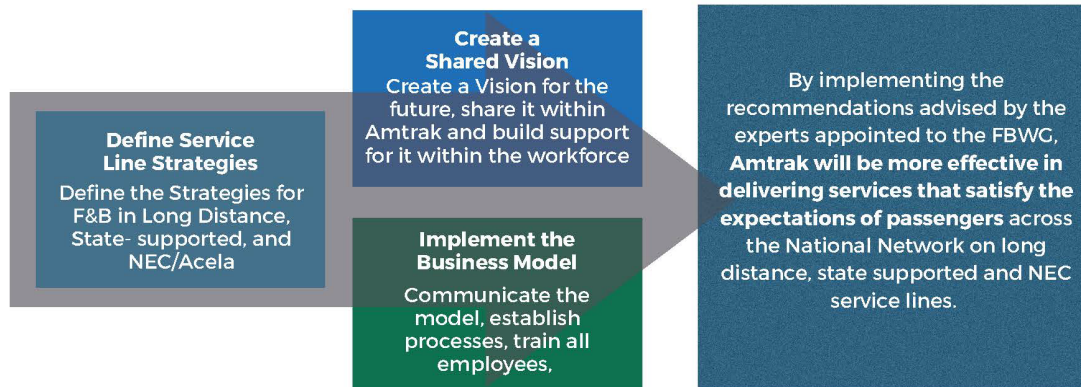
FBWG ONE PAGER

ABOUT THE FBWG:

Congress directed the formation of the Food and Beverage Working Group (FBWG) in the 2021 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to provide recommendations to improve Amtrak's onboard food and beverage service on its Long Distance, State-Supported, and Northeast Corridor service lines, specifically ways to improve the quality of food and beverage services, improve financial performance, and increase ridership.

INITIAL FINDINGS

The opportunity for renewal & growth generated by the IIJA investment and removal of congressional requirement on F&B profitability offer a unique opportunity to redefine F&B services.



The Food & Beverage Working Group (FBWG) found that railroads and airlines treat F&B as a cost of doing business, with no expectation of making a profit. The FBWG recommends allocating a percentage of revenue to F&B and planning accordingly to meet customer expectations and provide food and beverage service at a reasonable cost. The group also determined that, while continuous enhancement of the Food and Beverage items on board is important, **delivering consistently good service is not achievable without first fixing the systems** that are in play behind the scenes impacting the quality and availability of the Food and Beverage services on board all routes across the United States.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

The FBWG recommends Amtrak leaders make improvements in 3 major components of Amtrak's F&B business:

- Amtrak leadership needs to **clearly define and communicate** its F&B strategy and business model,
- **Implement infrastructure improvements** to support the food and beverage strategy, and
- Develop an **employee engagement strategy** that supports a culture of service excellence.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The FBWG believes the following recommendations to be mission critical to the continued success and longevity of our National Passenger Rail Network bringing this historical company into this century and beyond.

(See Page 2)



SYSTEM-WIDE

- Define Vision / Strategy for all 3 service lines
- Elevate Café Car service capability with a menu featuring healthy and fresh food offerings, updated equipment, and a crew-centric approach to F&B performance.
- A comprehensive Food & Beverage experience across digital platforms, at stations, and onboard, providing customers with precise and timely information while enhancing the digital interface for employee use.
- Food Safety Compliance with Clear and Complete Ingredient Listing
- Install and Operate Satellite Wi-Fi on All Amtrak Trains
- Retrofit Existing Cars and Maintain Fleet
- Align Amtrak and Aramark staff roles to improve onboard F&B performance.
- Improve F&B Sustainability Program, Waste Control and Recycling
- Align Amtrak's onboard service culture and establish management practices to deliver high quality customer experience with food and beverage service excellence, supported by train and/or crew-based teams.
- Establish a rapid cycle process for evaluating new menu items, new products, and changes affecting onboard food and beverage services.
- Upgrade OBS employee training to include Customer Experience and Food Service training.
- Re-establishment of the Amtrak Customer Advisory Committee to meet the needs of the modern American passenger.
- Communication incentive to celebrate the wins.

LONG DISTANCE

- Open the dining car across the national network with a traditional menu and access to the dining car for all passengers regardless of ticketed class.
- Reintroduce Just For You program to increase revenue, reduce food waste and provide affordable meals to meet the economic needs of passengers travelling on a budget.

STATE SUPPORTED ROUTES

- Localize product onboarding and removal for regional and state supported routes
- Expand Quality Control efforts to improve Customers' Food and Beverage Experiences

NEC / ACELA

Revitalize the standard of excellence for Acela and for Acela First Class Service as the best example of first-class travel in the US.

LONG TERM VISION

Project Follow Through - The recommendations made by this Congressionally appointed group are achievable within five years so long as there is a commitment to follow up by Congress and transparency from Amtrak management. **To ensure the recommendations are successfully implemented, we have recommended a series of strategic Committees committed to the follow through and monitoring of our combined efforts.**

Future Technologies - FBWG has identified many trends that could have a positive impact on the rail traveling public. In order to stay relevant with the changing demands of younger passengers, Amtrak must prepare for innovative new alternatives.

State Sponsored Expansion - FRA's expansion plans are **an opportunity for Amtrak to work with potential state partners** to develop models for F&B support on future routes.

Commissary Rethink - Amtrak owns or leases 11 commissaries where much of their on board inventory is stored. It is worth the effort to charter a team to consider a complete rethink of how Amtrak handles the logistics of getting food, beverages and supplies to the trains.





(This page left intentionally blank)



Thank You

Food & Beverage Working Group

Contact Information:

Madison Butler – Communications Manager, Rail Passengers - Association mbutler@narprail.org

Kirk Fredrickson - Passenger Rail Services Manager, Washington State DOT - Fredrik@wsdot.wa.gov

Haley Glynn - PR Marketing Manager, Virginia Passenger Rail Authority - haley.glynn@vpra.virginia.gov

Mariah Morales – Director of Government Affairs – Amtrak: Mariah.Morales@amtrak.com

Mike Hunter - Overland Resource Group - m.hunter@orginc.com