
OLR Bill Analysis

HB 5425

AN ACT CONCERNING HERITAGE RAILWAYS AND ALCOHOLIC LIQUOR.

SUMMARY

This bill allows heritage railways to sell alcoholic liquor (e.g., beer, wine, or spirits) for public consumption in any club, parlor, dining, buffet, or lounge car of a heritage railway passenger train. It does so by establishing a short-term railway cafe permit and then allowing a permittee to convert to a cafe permit by deeming it in compliance as a heritage railway, except the annual fee is \$200 instead of \$2,000 as for the railway cafe permit.

Under the bill, a “heritage railway” is any railway service that (1) is operated primarily for historical preservation and tourism purposes; (2) has retained or assumed an antiquated appearance or character and antiquated railway operating practices; and (3) uses antiquated railway equipment including antiquated locomotives and rolling stock.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

SHORT-TERM HERITAGE RAILWAY (§ 2)

The bill establishes a short-term heritage railway cafe permit with abilities substantially similar to railway cafe permittees. Like for railway cafes, the short-term heritage railway cafe permittee is subject to all the privileges, obligations, and penalties under the Liquor Control Act, except that the permit is issued to a corporation instead of an individual. Unlike for railways, the permit is only valid for six months and if it is revoked, the corporation may make another application at any time after six months from the revocation.

Conversion to Heritage Railway Cafe Permit (§§ 2 & 5)

During the calendar year a short-term heritage railway cafe permit is

issued, the permittee may apply to the Department of Consumer Protection (DCP), in a DCP-set way, to convert the permit into a heritage railway cafe permit. The annual permit's effective date is the date the short-term heritage railway cafe permit was issued. The new permit fee is the cafe permit fee amount of \$200 minus any fee the applicant paid for the short-term heritage railway permit.

Allowable Hours (§ 12)

Like other permittees for on-premises consumption, short-term heritage railway cafe permittees may only sell, dispense, allow people to consume, or have containers of alcohol during the following hours: generally from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. the next morning on Monday through Thursday, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. the next morning for Friday and Saturday, and 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. the next morning on Sunday. Similarly, they may not be open to, or occupied by, the public outside these times.

Additionally, it is unlawful for the short-term heritage railway cafe permittee to keep the premises open to the public during the hours of 1:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. Monday through Friday and 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. Saturday and Sunday or when the permit is suspended.

Regardless of any other law in the Liquor Control Act, the short-term heritage railway cafe permittee may keep the permit premises open to, or occupied by, the public when it is used as a place for film, television, video, or digital production that is eligible for the state film production tax credit. But the permittee is still limited in when he or she may sell, dispense, or allow the consumption of alcohol to the hours above.

Extension of Cafe Permittee for Railway Abilities, Exemptions, and Requirements (§§ 3, 4 & 6-11)

The bill also extends to short-term heritage railway cafe permittees the same provisions that apply to railway cafe permittees under existing law. This includes provisions:

1. exempting them from a town vote to void liquor permits (§ 3);
2. allowing the permit to be for less than a year and to be granted to

- a corporation rather than a person (§ 4);
3. allowing them to store alcoholic liquor on the premises and at one other secure location registered and approved by DCP (§ 6);
 4. exempting them from having to (a) submit certain documents proving local compliance, (b) post newspaper notices, (c) put certain notices on the proposed premises, and (d) be subject to a DCP suitability hearing (§ 7);
 5. exempting them from the law requiring DCP to refuse liquor permits to certain people (e.g., certain law enforcement officials and minors) (§ 8);
 6. allowing backers or permittees of this permit to hold another permit in another permit class (§ 9);
 7. requiring the permittee to file a duplicate of the permit with the New Haven town clerk before the permit is effective (§ 10); and
 8. exempting them from having to frame and hang the permit or a duplicate in plain view (§ 11).

COMMITTEE ACTION

General Law Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 22 Nay 0 (03/12/2025)