

TO ALL SUPPORTERS OF TRAC, THE ADK SCENIC RAILROAD AND THE REMSEN-  
LAKE PLACID TRAVEL CORRIDOR - TRAINS AND TRAILS

A lot of activity has been taking place since the ruling by the APA on February 11. A decision was taken to stay off the social media sites until there was something of substance about a clearer path ahead about how to continue the effort to get the win-win of upgraded rail services and investments in a better trail system.

This win-win was first adopted by NYS with the Travel Corridor Unit Management Plan (UMP) in 1996. It has not been properly implemented by the State. NYS DOT has done its part, investing in the Saranac Lake to Lake Placid segment that opened in 2000. At the south end of the corridor track improvements totaling almost 50 miles have made possible the variety of passenger services offered by the Adirondack Scenic Railroad.

The unfortunate conflict over the past few years between those who want to preserve the rails and those who want rail removal can easily be linked to the DEC's failure to uphold its responsibilities as outlined in the 1996 UMP that it authored.

Embracing the "win-win" that was defined in 1996, the group called TRAC that brings together permanent and seasonal residents with skills in railroading, historic preservation, economic and community development, NYS agency administration, and trail design and construction, has worked with Region 5 DEC personnel to develop and design a trail from Tupper Lake to Saranac Lake. Using DEC trail construction guidelines, the TRAC design would provide a safe, year-round trail with a variety of experiences for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities to enjoy walking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and snow shoeing. The trail uses already designated DEC trails as well as portions of the travel corridor. The TRAC trail design can be built and the issues raised about wetlands are solvable. TRAC's effort, when coupled with designs for a trail from Lake Placid towards Saranac Lake, would help achieve the objectives of Alternative 6 that has been the NYS policy since 1996. The DEC Albany headquarters effort to dismiss this huge planning initiative by dedicated volunteers has no parallel in any other UMP development process.

Compounding the faults of a poorly conceived UMP amendment, the APA's ruling regarding conformity with the State Land Master Plan (SLMP) was also deeply flawed. It did not respect or comply with the Agency's own legal requirements, or the recommendations of the Chairman of the Agency's State Lands Committee, an experienced attorney. It was clear from the draft amendment document, the DEC's November presentation to the Agency, and the APA staff's February presentation to the APA Board of Commissioners that the extensive effort undertaken to develop and review the preferred

Alternative 6 in the 1996 UMP, was not repeated in the State's recent development and review of Alternative 7 .

Let's review what has been put in motion. Local government organizations have voiced support for retention and upgrade of the rails AND investments in an improved trail system; three of these have most of the territory where the rails could be removed:

- The Town of Harrietstown
- The Franklin County Legislature
- The Franklin County Industrial Development Agency
- The Oneida County Legislature is voting this week on another resolution of support calling for full restoration to passenger rail standards all the way to Lake Placid.

The Preservation League of New York, a prestigious organization dedicated to preservation of historic properties and places in New York State has placed the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor and the railroad on its 2016 list of "Seven to Save." The communications and advocacy experience of this group will bring state-wide attention to the efforts to retain this historic property and upgrade rail services all along the full travel corridor to Lake Placid. Up until now, the PR effort by TRAC and others has essentially been local. The League is well known across NYS; we will be working closely with League staff, AARCH and Historic Saranac Lake to continue the effort to get NYS to do the right thing for residents and visitors to the Tri-Lakes and all along the corridor.

A Corridor Preservation Fund has been established to help pay for legal expenses that will arise from challenges to the actions by the APA and the DEC. There are time constraints for filing such challenges; a lawyer has been hired. Donations can be made online by going to this URL  
[https://apps.vendini.com/donation-software.html?  
d=3389789150582d4e09005fa0673a0871&t=donation](https://apps.vendini.com/donation-software.html?d=3389789150582d4e09005fa0673a0871&t=donation)

or <http://www.adirondackrr.com/membership.html>.

Or mail a check for what you can afford to:

Adirondack Scenic Railroad  
421 Broad St. Suite #7  
Utica, NY 13501  
Attention: Nicholas Stachura

Updates on the legal steps will be provided as they occur.

The TRAC members able to attend a meeting the day following the APA ruling were unanimous in recommending that ASR operate the SL to LP segment this summer in a manner to make sure the experience is memorable and that the

local communities remember what will be lost if the rails are removed. These actions were also strongly endorsed to:

- Continue the effort to inform other local governments about the benefits of trains and trails;
- Support the efforts by the historic preservation groups;
- Ensure a maximum cooperation with Rail Explorers rail biking in PR and marketing efforts;
- Enlist SL merchants to keep careful records of sales when the train is operating, and then using that data in PR during and after the season; and,
- Request that the ASR push the DOT for specifics about when the track upgrades described in Alternative 7 will begin.

The UMP amendment, approved by the Adirondack Park Agency specifies that rail removal can begin at the completion of the 2016 operating season for the Adirondack Scenic Railroad. The effort to ensure that this does not happen continues. Working together with enlightened business owners, State and local officials, our not-for-profit organizational partners, and an informed public, I have no doubt that we will prevail.