

Rail removal enthusiasts are single minded in their pursuit of that objective. There appears to be no room for compromise in their thinking. The presentations made to the public hearings in recent months, were done prior the successful introduction of the rail bike enterprise that is so successful; recent remarks in this publication indicate that even that shared, hugely popular, use of the travel corridor will not be accommodated.

The rail infrastructure in the travel corridor needs to be retained for three main reasons:

1) The past. The railroad helped build Saranac Lake. It is on both the State and the National registers of historic places. It is a piece of living history and, as such, should be upgraded and properly maintained and preserved. With the enactment of the APA's masterplan, most industry and commerce are deemed nonconforming in the core of the Adirondacks. Tourism is as a consequence today an important economic engine.

2) Present: This year, despite a late opening caused by factors beyond its control, the Adirondack Scenic Railroad will carry about 15,000 paying passengers in the Tri Lakes region. Rail Explorers, USA will draw close to 15,000 paying customers, at least 80% of whom are from outside the Tri Lakes area and made a particular effort to come and enjoy this unique attraction. ASR will have carried 70,000 paying passengers on the south end of the corridor. All told, some 100,000 paying customers used the travel corridor this season.

The owners of Rail Explorers estimate, a million dollar impact on the local economy. Many downtown Saranac Lake businesses benefit positively from the scenic rail operation; ask the business owners, and they will tell you that they know when the train arrives and when it leaves. They will also tell you that Rail Explorers has made a significant improvement in business sales.

Rail Explorers employs 15 local people at above average wages. The Railroad employs a few more. Can Saranac Lake really afford to throw away these jobs? The upside for the railroad and Rail Explorers, going forward, is a positive story.

3) The Future: Snowmobiling has been in decline. This is seen in both new purchases and registrations. . The North Country region already has between 3,000 to 6,000 miles of snowmobile trails; presentations at the public hearings in Tupper Lake and Utica strongly supported rail removal to make room for yet more miles. At a time when scientists are predicting climate change that will result in shorter winters and less snow in the Adirondacks why would area residents plan on a robust expansion of tourism based on snowmobiles?

We have a beautiful converted Rail Trail that connects Saranac Lake with Plattsburg and Montreal and beyond. Local residents use it mostly as a dog-walking trail. It is an underused local asset, and it is not a tourist draw.

On the other hand, rail travel, worldwide and in the US is in steady upswing. The whole world is investing in railroads. More miles of track have been laid in North America over the past couple of years than at any time since the end of

World War II. Tourists from around the world are used to using railroad to reach a destination. Railroads and recreational trails can and do coexist. Modern communication technologies have made side-by-side recreation and rail travel possible and this is happening in other places.

It will cost the taxpayers far more to rip up the rails and build and maintain a recreational trail. Per mile, the national averages are about \$350,000 per mile to rehab the rails, and about \$440,000 per mile to convert to a recreational trail.

The rail removal enthusiasts wonder why anyone would still hold out hope that Albany will change its mind about effectively destroying the railroad. Some of us believe that we still live a democracy, and that a business success like Rail Explorers, located in Saranac Lake after considerable market research, should not be put out of business.

I encourage others to speak up and be heard.