

TRAC COMMENTS TO DEC/DOT PUBLIC HEARING 07/20/2015 FROM BOB HEST

I represent a group of permanent and seasonal residents in the Tri-Lakes region who have worked to create a win-win solution of trails with rails in the section of the travel corridor from Tupper Lake to Lake Placid that is the subject of this hearing. We are TRAC

Our efforts help NYS implement the present Alternative 6. We provided detailed maps and engineering drawings for the segment from Tupper Lake to Saranac Lake during the public consultation hearings that ended in December 2014. Without any future consultation or discussions Alternative 7 has been developed that discards hundreds of volunteer hours of effort.

NYS has a history of bold and imaginative economic development - to keep with this tradition, Alternative 6 offers by far the biggest economic benefit to the Adirondack region and the benefits of rail and trail enhancements will happen much sooner than a rail trail.

The economic impact study commissioned by NYS Empire State Development to support Alternative 7 is inadequate and faulty. No examination has been done of the benefit of rails AND trails. Too many people have been seduced by the false premises used by those who advocate for rail removal in a time when rail is an increasingly important component of our nation's transportation system.

Consider:

- The rail industry throughout north America is investing billions each year to upgrade service and infrastructure
- Increasing numbers of travelers, north Americans as well as foreign visitors do not use automobiles
- Our neighboring state, Vermont, has improved passenger rail services throughout the state to help reduce auto congestion on the narrow roads there characteristic of the same highway network in the Adirondacks. If a small state like Vermont, about the same size as the Adirondack Park, thinks this is the right way to go why would NYS ignore this example of what works?

NYS is abdicating its responsibility having not properly implemented an adopted policy for the travel corridor that is Alternative 6. To now propose Alternative 7, saying that an adjacent trail, designed and mapped by volunteers using NYS DEC guidance, is infeasible, and using a poorly designed and executed economic impact analysis to support Alternative 7 is inequitable.

With climate change predicting a continuing trend of shorter winters, with less snowfall, and economic policies that ensure higher prices for transport fuels, it

is folly to consider that snowmobilers will drive an expansion of the region's tourism industry in the short season available.

In contrast an upgraded and expanded rail operation all the way to the heart of the Tri-Lakes, combined with investments in a trail system that provides safe, interesting opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities will enhance and assure economic opportunities that are just plain better for the Adirondack Region and much sooner than rail removal.

It is long past time for NYS to fulfill its responsibilities to our region.