

July 26, 2015

To all to whom it concerns:

My name is Gary Landrio. I have been involved in recreational and tourism operations and consulting for 39 years. I was one of the co-authors of the 1990 Adirondack North Country Association report that made an assessment of the future recreational uses of the Utica to Lake Placid Transportation Corridor. Along with others I was a mentor to those who gave of their time talent and treasure to begin the Adirondack Centennial Railroad, which is now part of the Adirondack Scenic Railroad.

Trail Options for the Corridor

When the Unit Management Plan was formulated in 1996, I assisted rail and trail advocates with factual data to evaluate the rail with trail compatibility issues and assisted the New York Department of Transportation with the development of a trail classification system to help in the evaluation of what sections of the corridor could be developed with which category of trail. Through both engineering and field analysis we believed at that time that a trail system could parallel the entire rail corridor. Dan Mecklenburg's work should be used as a benchmarking document to further this discussion.

Tourism Reality

Having worked with major tourism projects for Disney, Xanterra and actor Kevin Costner among others I have learned the critical difference between attractions that make a tourism market and those that simply add to the existing market. With rare exceptions, neither trails nor rail operations make the market. The market must already exist. Therefore the ability of either of these venues to significantly create a new and larger tourism market is unrealistic.

The above is not to be interpreted to say that they cannot in each their own way add to the market and enhance the tourism and recreational attraction of this region. The key is to understand consumer behavior and to connect the strengths of a proposed venue to the next logical needs of the existing market. A great example of that began this summer along this corridor.

Embrace New Options

The Rail Explorers rail bike operation is just the exact stepping stone attraction the Adirondacks need. It plays upon people's desire to make contact with the natural environment in a way that does not require a large commitment of time and/or effort. This rail bike operation is a low impact approach of gaining access to the pristine rail

corridor and a way to gauge the future need for enhanced access options. It is a low capital cost operation that can and should be duplicated on multiple locations of the corridor.

The rail bike type of operation could also be brought to Tupper Lake-Piercefield, Big Moose-Beaver River and maybe Remsen- Kayuta Lake with some use of creative marketing and proper set up of operational safety protocols.

Historic Preservation

After almost forty years, I have come to realize that I am not as smart as I had once thought that I was. This revelation has caused me both to rethink some past decisions and to better appreciate the wisdom of preserving our resources, both natural and manmade. The designation of the 118 miles from Snow Junction near Remsen to Lake Placid embodies that wisdom. That designation should remind us that the decisions that we make today may not be in the best interest of those who follow us. We are the stewards of these assets for our children and beyond. Removing the rail of an artifact that has been designated both a New York State and National Historic District is probably short-sighted.

The request to the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to remove the rails could easily result in litigation from both regional and national preservation groups. Since the method of construction and the extent of the rail being a historic artifact were part of the justification of the original SHPO designation, the removal of rail should trigger the view that the state would be destroying the historic integrity of this corridor. This would delay again the realization of access and development of this valuable corridor. Other compromises do exist that would avoid these barriers and allow the Adirondack region to embrace all that this corridor can offer, sooner rather than later. Let not those who follow us be able to look back and see that due to the pressures from multiple sides of this discussion, that we limited the future for this Adirondack region.

Sincerely,
Gary E. Landrio
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