

Dear Senator/ Assemblyman XYZ...

The residents of the Northern Adirondacks continue to face economic challenges, similar to those faced by rural America. Our permanent population is stagnant and aging. Resource extraction and conversion that employs fellow citizens in other parts of our nation cannot happen within the Blue Line.

Tourism is and must continue to be nurtured as one of the economic engines for our region. I write to you because one of the current and potential contributors to a strong tourism economy is slated for imminent destruction by a policy proposal by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The DEC, with limited public input, is proposing a major amendment to the current Unit Management Plan (UMP) for the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor that will remove one-third of the historic rail infrastructure and replace it with a trail system operated by the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA).

The DEC has never revealed the ORDA involvement in public meetings. The most recent public meetings about revising the UMP were held this past summer; the focus of those meetings involved removal of the rails and conversion to a so called rail trail.

There are several issues with the DEC proposal in any form. If successful it is unprecedented in converting an operating rail service to a trail. There exist already many thousands of miles of trails for use by hikers, bikers, and snowmobile enthusiasts throughout the Adirondack region. There is only one rail corridor that can connect the largest communities within the Blue Line to the continental passenger and freight rail network.

Since July of this year, the Adirondack Scenic Railroad, operating between Saranac Lake and Lake Placid, and a new enterprise Rail Explorers, USA, a rail bike excursion operating between Saranac Lake and Lake Clear Junction have carried about 30,000 paying customers to and from our town. This made a significant positive impact on our village where roughly half of Saranac Lake's downtown retail stores are vacant. Based on a detailed survey of a large sample of the almost 15,000 Rail Explorer riders only, over a million new dollars were spent in the regional economy since July.

The travel corridor has both State and National Historic status. It is living history, and a very important tourist draw. The rail bikes, unique in north America, have become a sensation, gaining news coverage and riders from all over the US and Canada. The DEC proposal to rip up the rails will mean both of these economic engines in the local economy would be gone, along with the 20 current jobs that pay above the regional average. If the rail infrastructure were to be restored connecting Saranac Lake and Lake Placid with the southern part of the tourist railroad and with Amtrak in Utica, the upside potential of

both enterprises is unlimited.

We have already thousands of miles of underutilized snowmobile trails, bike trails, and cross country ski trails in the Northern Adirondacks. Destruction of the existing operation and rail infrastructure will remove an existing economic asset with no viable proven replacement; it will forever diminish opportunity for business and recreation for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.

I am asking that you please do your part to keep and rebuild this historic treasure and growing economic engine. The DEC proposal will be presented for review and approval to the Adirondack Park Agency at the November 2015 meetings. Please make your views known to Governor Cuomo.

Respectfully,