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NYS Travel Corridor  
NYS DOT Freight & Passenger Rail Bureau  
NYS Department of Transportation  
50 Wolf Road, POD 5-4  
Albany, NY 12232

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Thank you for the opportunity to share my public comment on the amendment of the UMP/EIS for the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor. DEC and DOT have posed the following questions in bold, and I have provided my comments below.

**Should the 1996 RLPTC UMP be amended to convert the Tupper Lake to Lake Placid segment of the Corridor to a recreational trail?**

- The UMP/EIS should NOT be amended to convert the railroad to a recreational trail. In its current use as a railroad, the Corridor is a unique resource within the Park. There are hundreds and hundreds of miles of hiking, biking, and snowmobile trails already in existence, making the rail line even more notable and in need of preservation.
- The corridor and its appurtenances are on the State and National Register of Historic Places. Changes to the corridor that affect this status, especially the removal of the rails, would be a terrible precedent for our Park. We have such a rich cultural history, and railroads are at the heart of the story.
- Rail travel is an excellent, sustainable mode of transportation, compatible with the character of the Adirondack Park, from ecological, social, and economic standpoints. I am an ecologist by training and I have compared the per capita carbon footprint of rail travel to personal vehicle travel, and transportation by rail is far less polluting. Being able to bring more people and freight into the Park by train rather than car is a win for the environment

and the economy. For many decades now, the globally unique Adirondack Park has been a national and international leader in sustainable development, and improvements in the Park's rail infrastructure fit with our recognized model of sustainability. From a sociological point of view, recreationists visiting to use a converted trail will be arriving almost completely by personal vehicle, which is socially gentrifying and further removes underrepresented demographic groups from experiencing the Adirondacks.

- Trains offer an excellent opportunity for universal access in our Park where it is often challenging to find ADA-compliant, all-ages and abilities recreational opportunities. One significant group of recreationists who cannot be included if the rails are removed are the physically impaired. We visit the Saranac Lake Union Depot many times during train season and frequently see handicapped passengers using the special lift the railroad provides. When aging friends and family, or those with young children, visit us, there are few choices for activities in the Tri-Lakes area. Fortunately, The Wild Center and the Adirondack Scenic Railroad are two such options to share our Park with physically-challenged visitors.
- A multi-use trail with motorized and non-motorized use is simply not compatible or safe, and will result in a much greater enforcement problem than DEC has the budget or capability to handle. As an avid cross-country skier, I have learned never to ski where there are snowmobiles. The two times I have done it on the Bloomingdale Bog Trail in Saranac Lake and the Jackrabbit Trail in Keene, I have almost been hit by snowmobiles going too fast. In summer, there is no question that removal of the rails would result in an increase in trespass onto State and private land by all-terrain vehicles and mountain bikes not zoned for such use.
- I believe the solution to the controversy surrounding the management of the corridor comes in the form of compromise: rail infrastructure is maintained and improved, and in key segments, where feasible and desirable, a multi-use trail be constructed alongside the rails that connects with other Community-Connector trails that may or may not be alongside

the railroad. I have had the opportunity to see a presentation by the Trails with Rails Action Committee (TRAC, <http://www.trailswithrails.org/press.html>) and I am deeply impressed with the long-range, Park-wide, strategic planning this group has accomplished using the railroad and its community connections as its backbone. To tear out this existing backbone from our Park would be a foolhardy step backwards in the visionary regional planning that the Adirondack Park is famous for.

**Should the 1996 RLPTC UMP be amended to bolster rail service along the remainder of the Corridor?**

- I feel the best possible use of the corridor is to maintain and improve the existing rail infrastructure and expand rail service along the entire length of the Corridor from Remsen to Lake Placid.

**What opportunities exist to expand snowmobile routes and other recreational trails to connect communities between Old Forge and Tupper Lake?**

- This moment in time is a great opportunity for the public, citizen action groups, and State Agencies to work hand-in-hand to weave together the State Land Master Plan, the Comprehensive Snowmobile Plan, visions identified at Common Ground Alliance meetings, and the existing RLPTC UPM/EIS so that we can all find areas of commonality, compromise, and teamwork to move forward - not backward!! - in Park-wide regional assessment of recreational opportunities that benefit all groups.

Please maintain and improve the unique and much-needed rail infrastructure in the Park.

Sincerely,  
Sunita Halasz