

T R A C

TRAILS WITH RAILS ACTION COMMITTEE

*a diverse citizen group supporting rails with trails in
the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor*

December 18, 2015

Via email SLMP_Comments@apa.ny.gov

NYS Adirondack Park Agency
P.O. Box 99
Ray Brook, NY 12977

RE: Comments on Draft Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor UMP Amendment
(Alternative 7)

Dear Agency Commissioners, Designees and Staff,

I write to provide comments on the NYS DEC proposal to amend the current UMP, a proposal that will, if implemented, affect a great many aspects of land use planning throughout the Adirondack Park.

Colleague members of TRAC, notably Sunita Halasz, Dan Mecklenburg, Steve Erman, Historic Saranac Lake, Adirondack Architectural Heritage, amongst others, have submitted expert commentary that addresses in depth the specific issues in the non-conformance of Alternative 7 with the State Land Master Plan. Mr. Mecklenburg in particular also demonstrates in detail the design of a trail system that was developed with considerable assistance from NYS DEC District 5 personnel.

I want to add the following to those submissions:

- Alternative 7 does not include necessary SEQR information, thus fails to comply with the conditions agreed to in the March 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between the Adirondack Park Agency and the Department of Environmental Conservation concerning implementation of the APSLMP (Section IV, UMP Amendments, (1))
- The magnitude of change, if implemented as proposed, will prevent the achievement of the sound objectives of the UMP adopted in 1996
- The 1996 UMP Alternative 6 called for the preservation and enhancement of the rail infrastructure throughout the travel corridor, and development of a network of trails within and beyond the corridor, on other State lands. The incomplete implementation during the past 20 years, particularly in the lack of effort on trail development, continues to hamper the economic and recreation opportunities for residents and visitors throughout the region

- Removal of the rails extinguishes the definition of the travel corridor. The travel corridor in the SLMP is an overlay and adherence to the classification of the underlying land should not be dismissed without due process.

There is a renaissance and renewal of interest in passenger rail travel. The EIS that is being used to support Alternative 7 is flawed in many respects, particularly in the complete disregard of the economic and operating plan submitted by the current operator. The Adirondack Scenic Railroad and the more recently inaugurated RailExplorer success story contribute today more than the predicted benefit that might result from a rail trail.

An upgraded rail infrastructure and a long overdue investment in trail design and construction will create a win-win that remains in compliance with the SLMP. This is what was recommended in 1996 after a comprehensive process and input from all sectors of the region. The APA will provide an invaluable service and stay true to one of its mandates of long-range planning and use of the resources in the Adirondack Park, and contribute to helping enhance the tourism economy of the region.

Respectfully,

Signed

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