

APA Approves Rail To Trail Plan



By [PAT BRADLEY](#) · WAMC News,
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Adirondack Scenic Railroad

HOWARD BRIER/FLICKR

The Adirondack Park Agency Board of Commissioners has determined that a plan to convert part of an existing railbed to a recreational trail in the Adirondacks conforms to state land regulations.

The Remsen-Lake Placid travel corridor is a 119-mile route through the center of the Adirondacks. A plan to amend the rail corridor would divide it into two segments. One section maintains and improves the tracks between Remsen and Tupper Lake. 34 miles of the existing rails between Tupper Lake and Lake Placid would be removed and converted to a multi-use recreational trail.

During the board's monthly meeting Thursday, APA planner Walt Linck reviewed the plan and told the board it meets regulatory requirements. "Through this plan New York State DOT is

essentially swapping out one of its types of infrastructure, the railroad infrastructure, for another of its types. We see this to be within New York State DOT's purview."

Commissioner Dick Booth was uncomfortable about passing the resolution without first changing the State Land Master Plan. "I'm arguing the Master Plan language should be changed first, that's all I'm arguing."

A motion to delay a vote died and the panel determined that the plan does comply with the State Land Master Plan. "Those in favor please say aye. (AYE) Those opposed. I am opposing not for the substance but for the previous reasons. So that passes."

Trails with Rails Action Committee Coordinator Bob Hest is disappointed. "Somewhere along the line the realization that what we're talking about here is not about recreation vs. rails, we're talking about an economic impact that will be significant and growth will be supported more by a railroad than it will be by trails."

Adirondack Recreational Trail Advocates President Joe Mercurio says after six years of debate, the split rail and trail corridor is a reasonable compromise. "The railroad people got two-thirds of what they hoped to get which was improved infrastructure for train service of some kind from Tupper Lake south. And the rail-trail, meaning us, got one-third of what we asked for which is a 34 mile rail trail between Lake Placid and Tupper Lake. I'm happy with that. I would've hoped that this would've been the end of it but clearly just given the number of Facebook comments that have appeared just within the last 24 hours from rail diehards this is a long way from over."

Lake Placid Snowmobiling Club President Jim McCulley is a co-founder of Adirondack Recreational Trail Advocates. He is optimistic that by next year the 34 miles will be open for trail use. "This trail now connects everything else. This has been a real impediment to snowmobiling just because the tracks just create so many issues with groomers, with equipment, with snowmobiles being damaged on it. Many people won't even ride it because of the issue with the tracks. So it's going to be a big benefit for the entire region."

The Adirondack Park Agency will forward the conformance resolution to the commissioners of the Departments of Environmental Conservation and Transportation for final adoption. If agency action is finalized, tracks on the trail section could be removed after December 31st. Some rail groups are considering legal action to delay or stop implementation.