

Colton town board backs state rail-trail plan

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The Colton town board resolved last week to support a controversial state rail-trail plan and asked that it be started soon.

In a 3-0 vote - two members were away on vacation - the board passed a resolution Wednesday endorsing Option No. 7, an addition to the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor Unit Management Plan. Option No. 7 calls for railroad tracks to be rehabilitated from Big Moose north to Tupper Lake, and for tracks to be removed from the corridor's northernmost portion between Lake Placid and Tupper Lake, in favor of a trail for bicycling, snowmobiling and other uses. The Colton resolution said this arrangement "is in the best interest to the surrounding communities economically and will add additional venues and activities to our area and beyond."

The tracks run through a small corner of the town of Colton southwest of Tupper Lake between Horseshoe Lake and Lake Lila.

Railroad operators and supporters are considering suing over the plan, which would end Adirondack Scenic Railroad excursion trains between Lake Placid and Saranac Lake as well as a dream of running train service all the way up from Utica, as existed in the line from 1892 until the 1960s for passengers and the 1970s for freight. Others, however, say a multi-use trail will be better for the Adirondacks.

The state departments of Environmental Conservation and Transportation proposed the plan, and the Adirondack Park Agency approved it in February. The Colton town board urged the state to implement its plan as soon as possible "so that communities can develop plans, promotions and funding."

A few years ago, Colton was one of five towns, along with two villages and St. Lawrence County, that resolved to replace the tracks with a trail all the way from Lake Placid to the Old Forge area. The Franklin County and town of Harrietstown boards recently voted in favor of preserving the railroad.