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Executive Director

29 Elk Street
Albany, NY 12207
P 518.434.1583
F 518.427.0067
www.ptny.org
ptny@ptny.org



February 5, 2014

Honorable Betty Little
Legislative Office Building, Room 310
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Little:

We ask for your support in initiating the state-mandated review of the Unit Management Plan (UMP) for the Remsen to Lake Placid Travel Corridor between Old Forge and Lake Placid. Review of the UMP is now 12 years past due.

More than 12,000 individual and 400 business signatures have been gathered in favor of conversion of the rail corridor to a recreational trail. In addition, eight municipalities along the corridor have passed resolutions supporting immediate trail construction, with another four municipalities and the Saranac Lake Chamber calling for immediate UMP review. The 58,000-member NYS Snowmobile Association has also asked the State to act now and build the rail-trail. Editorials in Capital Region and North Country newspapers have come out strongly for taking action.

Parks & Trails New York also supports creation of a multi-use trail on this corridor as it would offer a unique opportunity for safe, off-road travel between Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake, accompanied by the ever-changing beauty of the surrounding landscape. Because of its significant history and high degree of integrity, this corridor is an ideal venue for telling the story of the activities and events that shaped this area of the Adirondacks.

This beautiful and geographically-diverse corridor offers a unique cycling experience, one that will have great tourism appeal. Few trails in the country can transport you to such a variety of mountain, lake and forest environments. Market trends substantiate that the appeal of the Adirondack Recreational Trail will be great.

- Bicycling is now the second most popular outdoor activity in America by frequency of participation. In 2010, Americans ages 6 and older went on 2.44 billion bicycling outings, averaging 58 outings per bicyclist.¹
- According to the U.S. Travel Association, half of all adults in the U.S. (98 million persons) participate in adventure vacations each year, and 27 million have taken a bicycling vacation in the past five years.
- Between 2006 and 2011, bicycling was one of only 12 sports that had a positive trend in increased participation (up 11.8%).² Moreover, adventure travel receipts increased 17% between 2009 and 2010.

¹ Outdoor Foundation, 2011 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2011 - <http://www.bikesbelong.org/resources/stats-and-research/statistics/participation-statistics/#sthash.ti9jSd3a.dpuf>.
² http://policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/pucher/TRA960_01April2011.pdf

- Cycling vacations are popular with Europeans and New York State is the number one destination for Germans and the number two destination for the British.³

A recent study for the 34-mile Lake Placid to Tupper Lake section of the corridor projected that each cycling tourist could pump \$63.86 to \$99.30 per day and conservatively add \$19.8 million in annual revenues to local economies.⁴ A survey of users of the Virginia Creeper Trail, which is of a length and environment similar to the Lake Placid to Tupper Lake section, found that nonlocal, primary-purpose overnight users spent \$119.85 per day within 25 miles of the trail, generating \$1.6 million of new economic activity and supporting almost 30 jobs for the two counties where the trail is located.

More difficult to quantify, but no less important, are the benefits that the Adirondack Recreational Trail will provide for enhancing quality of life, improving community health, and addressing rising health care costs. Spending on obesity-related diseases in New York State totals \$11.1 billion (in 2009 dollars). Medicaid finances \$4 billion and Medicare finances \$2.7 billion⁵ of these costs; these expenditures directly impact personal and property taxes and the availability of other services supplied by all levels of government. Yet, people who report having access to sidewalks and trails are 28-55% more likely to be physically active. A local multi-use trail that provides an off-road, alternative means of transportation can offer opportunities for all residents of the region to increase daily physical activity and improve health, and can ultimately lower health care costs.

Development of this corridor as the Adirondack Recreational Trail represents its highest and best use. Moreover, initiating the UMP process and, ultimately, building the Adirondack Recreational Trail conforms to the stated wishes of local communities and supports regional economic imperatives. **Due to the wide variety of community benefits the Adirondack Recreational Trail will generate, we ask that the state-mandated review of the Unit Management Plan (UMP) for the Remsen to Lake Placid Travel Corridor begin without further delay.**

Sincerely,



Robin Dropkin
Executive Director

³ U.S. Travel Update, I Love NY, PowerPoint presentation

⁴ Rails to Trails Conservancy, The Adirondack Rail Trail Lake Placid to Old Forge Stage One: Lake Placid to Tupper Lake Trail Development Plan

⁵ http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/chronic_diseases/focus_area_1.htm