

ADIRONDACK RECREATIONAL TRAIL ADVOCATES

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ARTA praises and criticizes state action

Adirondack Recreational Trail advocates (ARTA) applauds the decision by New York State to convert the historic rail corridor between Lake Placid and Tupper Lake into a year-round, multi-use “rail trail” for people of all ages and physical abilities. At the same time, ARTA called the state’s plan to consider extending tourist-train service between Old Forge and Tupper Lake “a counter-productive waste of taxpayer money.”

ARTA issued the following response to today’s announcement by the NYS Department of Transportation and Department of Environmental Conservation:

We commend New York State for its plan to proceed with Phase One of the Adirondack Rail Trail by repurposing the Lake Placid-Tupper Lake section of the 120-mile Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor through the Adirondack Park. Given the experience nationwide with rail-to-trail conversions as engines of economic growth, this is clearly the preferable option for the 34-mile section of the corridor connecting Lake Placid, Ray Brook, Saranac Lake, Lake Clear and Tupper Lake.

However, we strongly oppose any attempt to rebuild the 56-mile section of the corridor from Tupper Lake to Old Forge for rail use. There is no discernible demand for this service and the financially distressed Adirondack Scenic Railroad has presented no evidence of its ability to sustain, much less rebuild and expand, its tourist-train operation without large and continuous infusions of taxpayer dollars.

Most importantly, extending rail service between Old Forge and Tupper Lake would preclude development of the 56-mile section (Phase Two) of the Adirondack Rail Trail and prevent year-round use of the corridor for biking, hiking, running, walking, bird watching, etc. In addition to providing summertime access to Lake Lila, the Bog River, and some of the most scenic sites in the Adirondacks, this trail will be a major economic driver in the winter. The rusting tracks are currently a barrier to much greater snowmobile use between Old Forge, Tupper Lake and beyond, and their removal would greatly benefit those villages and settlements along the way.

We urge New York State to move ahead with both Phase One (Lake Placid-Tupper Lake) and Phase Two (Tupper Lake-Old Forge) of the Adirondack Rail Trail, thereby creating a 90-mile recreationway through the Adirondack Park. At the very least, we ask that no development of the Tupper Lake-Old Forge section be undertaken before evaluating the experience of the rail trail between Lake Placid and Tupper Lake. The popularity of this initial 34-mile section will make abundantly clear that the extended, 90-mile route is the best option.

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