

# Bike trail would be big boost for local economy

Adirondack Daily Enterprise, April 14, 2015

To the editor:

Your news stories and editorial on the need for revitalizing downtown Saranac Lake have been enlightening and on target. Only one element has been missing in your coverage. There has been no reference to what could be a key element in the revival of our village: the railroad corridor that connects Saranac Lake with Lake Placid to the east and Tupper Lake to the west.

We could be a bicycling destination. This is big business for small towns like ours, contributing to the local economy through visitors in need of lodging, restaurants, bike shops, outfitters, bakeries, ice cream shops, visitor centers and museums that tell of regional history.

Biking is now one of the most popular outdoor activities for adults and families, and this popularity is growing quickly. The rail bed we have here could, over the next couple of years, be easily transformed into one of the finest such bike trails anywhere, drawing people from all over the country and also providing us residents with a wonderful place to exercise and enjoy nature.

Think of the restored Hotel Saranac and the number of cyclists it could attract. These visitors would use the hotel as their base for biking trips out from here: in one direction a day trip to Lake Clear, the St. Regis Canoe Area, Rollins and Fish Creek ponds, Tupper Lake and the Wild Center; in the other direction an easy one-hour ride to Lake Placid.

Think of the throng of bikers rolling into town on the rail trail, marveling at our classic train depot that could serve as a restaurant, museum or bike shop. (Actually, the old lumber-yard buildings across from the depot would make a perfect bike shop and outfitting store.) From there, cyclists would stream through town onto Main Street and Broadway to patronize shops and restaurants.

This isn't just wishful thinking. It is a scenario based on what we've seen all over the eastern United States. Rail trails are a big deal nowadays. It is time to capitalize on this trend and help put Saranac Lake back on the map.

We have seen the future, and it is bicycling!

Rachel Rice

Saranac Lake