

The Saranac Lake - Lake Placid Recreational Path, A Work in Progress

Feasibility Study Findings and Summary of a Public Meeting on Connecting Lake Placid and Saranac Lake by Path

Prepared for the Adirondack North Country Association
with funding provided by the Bikes Belong Coalition, Ltd. Brookline MA

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Public Presentation and Discussion of Draft Report Findings
Held June 7, 2001 at the Hotel Saranac, Saranac Lake NY

This report presents the main findings of a study of 61 successful RAILS-with-Trails projects around the United States and summarizes specific characteristics of eight of the trails that are most similar to a project proposed for the railroad corridor linking Lake Placid and Saranac Lake. Presented as well are preliminary cost estimates for construction of a path within the railroad corridor along with brief descriptions of probable characteristics within each of 15 sections along its eight-mile length.

This information is presented in the interest of informing interested citizens, organizations, business owners, the Towns of North Elba and Harrietstown, and the Villages of Lake Placid and Saranac Lake on the opportunities, issues and precedents for developing an inter-community rails-with-trails project. Based on the study findings, construction of a recreational path within the railroad corridor is feasible and it would become a significant enhancement to both recreational opportunities and transportation alternatives in the Lake Placid, Ray Brook and Saranac Lake area.

This Report can be found on-line at: <http://www.bikeadironacks.org/newtrails.html>

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1 Summary and Overview

A grant from [Bikes Belong](#) Coalition in September, 2000 provided the Adirondack North Country Association ([ANCA](#)) the opportunity to undertake the preliminary planning process for developing an eight-mile recreational path between the communities of Saranac Lake and Lake Placid. While this feasibility study does not include any construction activities, it is the necessary first step for generating the information and community support vital to making the path a reality.

The Bikes Belong grant provided the opportunity to:

- Increase public awareness and understanding of the recreational path.
- Involve interested individuals, groups and organizations in planning and supporting the recreational path.
- Develop preliminary engineering specifications and a cost outline for the recreational path that will be useful for grant applications and fundraising.
- Initiate local partnerships that will contribute to the construction of a better path, and also ensure its long-term maintenance and support.

In addition, the grant has funded creation of [BikeAdirondacks.org](#), a new Web site that now serves as a source of information on this project and as a clearinghouse for bicycling information for the entire Adirondack region.

The findings of this feasibility study indicate that development of a recreational path within the railroad corridor linking Lake Placid and Saranac Lake is feasible based on the preliminary engineering report and a number of similar successful projects around the country.

1.1 **The Current Situation**

Route 86 between Lake Placid and Saranac Lake has one of the highest traffic volumes of any road in the Adirondack Park. The steady traffic, high speed limits and narrow shoulders combine to make it a difficult travel route for most cyclists, one which families with children rarely attempt. A recreational path will present new opportunities to enjoy a family bicycling outing.

1.2 **Developing a New Alternative**

A recreational path linking the two communities could take a variety of forms, including a separate path beside roads and highways, wider shoulders along sections of road, wider sidewalks on village streets, or a separate path within portions of the railroad corridor. This report recommends that while an eight-mile path linking Lake Placid and Saranac Lake will combine a variety of path types to create an alternative recreational path away from Route 86, the majority of the path should be constructed within the railroad corridor. The potential for building a path in the rail corridor was addressed in the *Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor Final Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement* as follows:

“On Corridor segments active for rail service operations and important for recreational uses, a recreational trail will be constructed within the boundaries of the Corridor property. An example will be the section of Corridor between Saranac Lake and Lake Placid, recreationally important as a bike path to alleviate bicycling on a high congestion highway.” (*March 1996: p16, prepared by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and NYS Department of Transportation*).

1.3 Who Will Benefit

Although Saranac Lake and Lake Placid are known as family tourism destinations offering a wide variety of recreational activities, the opportunities for a family-oriented bicycling experience are very limited. A recreational path linking the two popular villages will be an ideal addition to the region's recreation and transportation infrastructure. Along with adding valuable diversity to the recreational opportunities available to visitors, the path's development will strengthen and promote the area's reputation as a premier bicycling destination. For example:

- The path will be especially attractive to families on vacation -- one of the more rapidly growing tourism segments -- resulting in increased visitation, longer stays and additional tourism dollars in the two communities.
- The path will contribute to the area's reputation as a premier bicycling destination and lead to increased tourism activity during the summer as well as the spring and fall "off seasons."
- The path will become a tourism destination in and of itself -- as the bicycle path in Stowe, Vermont has become -- and will be an economic engine for bicycle shops, restaurants and other businesses in both communities.
- The path will generate new types of recreational activity in the area, possibly including community-to-community bicycle events and bicycle/train excursions that provide the option of bicycling one way and returning by train.

For local residents, the path will provide increased recreational opportunities for fun, fitness and transportation, including bicycling, running, cross-country skiing and walking. Possibilities for commuting to work by bicycle will be enhanced for the close to 1,000 people employed at the five government facilities in Ray Brook, the half-way point for the path. The social connection between Lake Placid and Saranac Lake will likely grow as well from this new opportunity to travel by bicycle between the two communities.

1.4 Taking the Next Step

The grant from Bikes Belong provided ANCA the opportunity to undertake the preliminary planning process for developing a eight-mile recreational path between the communities of Saranac Lake and Lake Placid. The main recommendation of this report is for the Towns of North Elba and Harrietstown, and the Villages of Saranac Lake and Lake Placid, to cooperatively develop a TEA-21 application for funding construction of the path. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) is our national transportation program and specifically mandates inclusion of bicycle facilities in state and regional transportation plans. In addition, each state is required to set aside ten percent of its annual Surface Transportation Program funds for Transportation Enhancement Activities (TEA). A recent example of TEA funding for a bicycle project in the Adirondack Park is the ANCA-sponsored bicycle path linking the communities of Thendara, Old Forge, Big Moose, Inlet and Eagle Bay (TOBIE). The findings from this feasibility study can make a major contribution to that application.

The opportunity for the success of this project has never been better and the need more timely. Historical use of an undeveloped path within the railroad corridor by mountain bikers, skiers, runners and walkers is now both unsafe and prohibited with the return of the corridor to active rail use.

Another reason why this grant is so timely is that the next round of TEA-21 funding will open in mid-2001. The TEA-21 program and its predecessor, ISTE, have been very beneficial to the Adirondack North Country by providing funding for a number of expensive community improvement projects. The Depot revitalization project in Saranac Lake, the Canton bicycle path, and the current TOBIE bicycle trail are three main examples. The NYS Department of Transportation and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation have both expressed support for the recreation path in the Environmental

Impact Statement on the corridor. Now is the time for the towns and villages along the corridor to step forward to lead the application process.

2 Overview of 61 Rails-with-Trails Projects in the U.S.

All of the following information in Chapter 2 is summarized from a [Rails-to-Trails Conservancy](#) report: **Design, Management and Operating Characteristics of 61 Trails Along Active Railroads**, published in October of 2000 and can be down-loaded in its entirety at:

http://www.trailsandgreenways.org/TAG_active_pages/TechnicalAssistance/main.asp?ContentPath=OnlineReferences/.asp?ContentPath=OnlineReferences/

2.1 What are Rails-with-Trails?

There are more than 1,000 multi-use trails in the United States operating on rail corridors no longer used by trains. This concept is well understood and has strong community support. The idea of rails-with-trails is less well known. It is the name given to multi-use trails along rail lines that are still active.

There are now over 60 rails-with-trails and they exist in 20 states, with Pennsylvania alone having nine, the most rails with trails projects of any state. At least 20 more rails-with-trails are known to be in various stages of development, with many more likely to be at the pre-development stages. One of the more ambitious now under study is the [Downeast Trail](#) in Maine, a four-season, multipurpose rails-with-trails linking Brewer and Ellsworth to Calais along 132 miles of the Calais Branch Railroad.

The following indicators demonstrate the range of conditions under which rails-with-trails have been successful.

- **Longest trail:** 57 miles (Railroad Trail, Michigan);
- **Shortest trail:** 0.4 miles (Libba Cotton Bikepath, North Carolina);
- **Longest length of rail next to trail:** 22 miles (Railroad Trail, Michigan);
- **Shortest length of rail next to trail:** 0.2mi (Watts Towers Crescent Greenway, California);
- **Fastest trains:** 150 mph (Southwest Corridor Park Trail, Massachusetts);
- **Slowest trains:** 5 mph (West Orange Trail, Florida);
- **Oldest trail:** 1966 (Illinois Prairie Path, Illinois);
- **Most recent trail:** 2000 (several trails);
- **Widest corridor:** 1,500 feet average width (Rose Canyon Bike Path, California);
- **Narrowest corridor:** 18 feet (Seattle Waterfront Trail and Duwamish Trail, both in Washington);
- **Closest to tracks:** 2 feet (Railroad Trail, Michigan);
- **Furthest from tracks:** 100 feet (several trails);
- **Most trains:** 9 per hour (Illinois Prairie Path, Illinois);

2.2 General Characteristics of Rails-with-Trails

Every day thousands of Americans safely use and enjoy trails located along active rail lines. The number of “rails-with-trails” is steadily increasing as communities throughout the United States work with local railroads to take advantage of the opportunities that rail corridors provide for creating valuable trails.

GROWTH: The growth and popularity of rails-with-trails appears to parallel the growth of traditional rail-trails. The report analyzes 61 existing rails-with-trails, up from the 37 rails-with-trails that were identified in Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's first rails-with-trails report in March 1996. At least another 20 rails-with-trails are being planned.

DUAL BENEFIT: Constructing a trail along an active railroad doubles the value a community derives from the rail corridor and provides citizens with an extra transportation choice. In many places it is difficult to find land on which trails can be built so using an existing rail corridor can be a good option. In some cases, trails support railways by providing enhanced access to railway stations.

SAFETY: Despite fears that rails-with-trails expose users to greater danger by their proximity to active rail lines, rails-with-trails appear to be just as safe as other trails. The survey of trails found only one accident between a trail user and a train. This is the same single accident identified in the March 1996 report that occurred on a trail otherwise operating safely for 34 years. In fact, using a rail-with-trail may well be significantly safer than walking or cycling next to a busy main road and it may serve to keep people from walking on active rail tracks.

RANGE OF DESIGNS: Rails-with-trails are operating successfully under a wide variety of conditions. Some are very close to rail tracks and others further away. Some use extensive separating fences or barriers. Some are next to high-speed, high-frequency train services. Others are on industrial branch lines or tourist railroads with slower trains operating only a few times per week. Some have at-grade crossings while others use underpasses.

RAILROADS: While railroad companies are understandably cautious of such projects, this report found that 20 out of 61 trail managers described the attitude of the railroad involved with their trail as supportive, positive or good (and in one case, "great!"). Only five trail managers reported the railroad company initially opposed their trail. Rail-with-trail benefits for the railroads can include corridor beautification, potential reduction of trespassing, reduced vandalism and increased ridership.

LIABILITY: The survey revealed that the vast majority of rails-with-trails are insured in a manner similar to other trails by existing state, county or city insurance coverage. An increasing number of railroad companies are requiring trail managers to indemnify them against liability. The report found only three claims made against trail managing agencies. Two of these cases were settled (one for a human injury and one for a farm animal). According to the survey results, no claims were made against railroad companies.

2.3 Safety

Safety is perhaps the most important aspect of developing any rail-trail, whether along an operating railroad or not. The good news is that rails-with-trails appear to be just as safe as other trails. Every day thousands of people across the United States safely use existing rails-with-trails.

Fears that more trail users would be severely injured due to the proximity of moving trains have not been realized. A 1999 draft report by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) technical committee noted that existing rails-with-trails appeared to be operating without major problems. This finding corroborates that of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's first rails-with-trails report in March of 1996.

There are only two rails-with-trails accidents on record. A bicyclist on the Illinois Prairie Path ignored an at-grade road crossing's warning bells and flashing lights and rode around a lowered crossing gate. The bicyclist was struck by an on-coming train and sustained injuries. Technically, this incident did not occur on the trail corridor but at an adjacent, pre-existing road/rail crossing. The only incident in this trail's 34-year history, it is the same single accident recorded in Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's 1996 report.

One other accident that occurred adjacent to a trail, but not involving a trail user, occurred adjacent to the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail in Anchorage, Alaska when a young person was injured after crossing the trail from a residential area to "hop" a slow-moving Alaska Railroad train.

In the right circumstances, rails-with-trails can be safer than trails next to roads. The ITE draft report notes that a trail set 25 feet from a track carrying 10 to 20 trains per day provides “substantially less exposure to potential accidents for people than riding or walking within a few feet of a road carrying between 10,000 and 40,000 vehicles per day.”

Trail managers can do a great deal to ensure that their trail has been designed well, and is operated and maintained to be as safe as possible. Each of the 61 trail managers surveyed for this study faced a variety of safety challenges that they have solved.

Key safety design factors include:

- Providing adequate distance between track and trail;
- Providing safe fencing, barriers or grade separation between track and trail where necessary;
- Designing safe rail crossings;
- Installing adequate trail-user warning signs.

This report found 43 of the 61 rails-with-trails surveyed had installed some kind of barrier between the rails and the trail. Barriers used include vegetation, grade separation, fences, ditches and cement walls. Crossings are at-grade, tunnels or overpasses.

2.4 Insurance and Liability

Three out of 61 trail managers had claims made against them:

- the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail in Alaska;
- the La Crosse River State Trail in Wisconsin;
- the Bugline Trail in Wisconsin.

The Alaska accident involved a settlement with the injured person. In the case of the La Crosse River State Trail, a farm animal broke through a fence, strayed onto the track and was killed by a train. A settlement was made to cover the value of the animal.

The other claim involved the alcohol-related death of the occupant of a car that drove onto the disused train line that later became the Bugline Trail in Wisconsin. The car drove off a trestle bridge onto another train line below and was hit by a train. The claim was not successful.

None of the 61 trail managers were aware of liability claims being filed against any railroads as a result of trails running along active rails. The survey data shows that rail operators increasingly are requiring trail managers to indemnify them against liability for accidents.

For rails-with-trails, the key to minimizing exposure to liability is the same as for other types of trails. The trail should be designed to accepted state and national standards by professionals and it must be systematically maintained and managed with clear, well-documented records.

2.5 Working with Railroads

This study found that in 20 cases (38% of the rails-with-trails analyzed), the railroad company’s attitude was described as “supportive,” “positive,” “good” or (in one case) “great.” There are a variety of reasons for railroads to support trails ranging from tangible benefits to the railroad to a desire to be a good corporate citizen and improve community relations. Of the 61 rails-with-trails surveyed, only five (8.2%) initially met with opposition from railroad companies, the same percentage as in 1996.

2.6 Federal Rails-with-Trails Best Practices Report

The federal government has launched a “best practices” study of rails-with-trails. The study, expected to be complete in October 2001, is under the control of the Federal Railroad Administration. It also involves the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. A draft of the “State of the Practice” report is currently available at: <http://www.altaplanning.com/fhwa/>. The first draft of the next phase, "Recommended Best Practices" will be available in late Spring 2001.

The report will cover development, implementation and operational issues for rails-with-trails, examine existing state guidelines for rails-with-trails and discuss the concerns of the railroad industry about rails-with-trails. It is expected to provide guidance for both trail planners and railway operators.

3 Descriptions of Eight Rails-With-Trails Most Relevant to this Path

3.1 Five Star Trail – Greensburg to Youngwood, Pennsylvania

The Five Star Trail is a rail-with-trail established in 1997 and located along the Southwestern Pennsylvania Railroad corridor between Greensburg and Youngwood, PA in central Westmoreland County. A 7.5-mile trail begins at Lynch Field in Greensburg and continues through South Greensburg to Youngwood with plans to extend the route to Armbrust. The trail parallels the county-owned railway tracks that the "Highlander" Steam Passenger Train operates on, creating possibilities for rail/trail excursions for hikers and bikers. The Five Star Trail is also an alternate transportation route, allowing students at Westmoreland Community College to bike from Greensburg - only a ½-hour ride.

The 64-foot wide rail corridor passes through what is described as a suburban environment. The trail width is 10 feet, and the distance between track and trail is 6 feet with no barrier between track and trail. The Five Star Trail provides the opportunity for non-motorized outdoor recreational experiences including walking, jogging, bicycling and cross-country skiing. The crushed limestone surface is handicapped accessible to accommodate everyone regardless of physical ability.

Most Relevant Features:

- Frequency of trains: 2 trains per day
- Type of rail use: freight
- Train speed: 20 mph
- Distance from track to trail: 6 feet
- Barriers between track and trail: none
- Trail surface: crushed limestone
- Uses: bicycling, running, walking, x-country skiing
- Other: wheelchair accessible, rail/trail excursions possible

<http://www.westol.com/5star> (description)

Five Star Trail Chapter - Regional Trail Corporation

Malcolm Sias - RD 12 Box 203, Greensburg, PA 15601; 724-830-3950

3.2 Clarion/Little Toby Creek Trail – Ridgway to Brockway, Pennsylvania

The Clarion-Little Toby Creek Trail is located in Elk and Jefferson Counties in north-central Pennsylvania between the towns of Ridgway and Brockway. The trail is approximately 20 miles in length and offers some very gentle, smooth riding with practically no hills at all.

Six freight trains per day pass through at speeds of 30 miles per hour on a 2-mile section of tracks adjacent to the Clarion-Little Toby Creek Trail. The width of the trail is 8 feet, and the distance between track and trail is 4 feet with no barrier between track and trail. The trail is open to the public for hiking, bicycling and cross-country skiing or other non-motorized use. More than four miles on either end is surfaced with original ballast, with a crushed stone surface in the middle section.

Most Relevant Features:

- Frequency of trains: 6 trains per day
- Type of rail use: freight
- Train speed: 30 mph
- Distance from track to trail: 4 feet
- Barriers between track and trail: none
- Trail surface: crushed stone, ballast
- Uses: bicycling, hiking, x-country skiing
- Other: rural landscape, scenic area, no highway crossings, wheelchair accessible

<http://www.ncentral.com/~dlove/lrail-m3.gif> - (map, mileage table)

<http://www.allegheny-online.com/clariontobyhiketrail.html> - (description, photos)

<http://www.ncentral.com/~dlove/lrail.htm> - (description, map, photos, rentals)

Tri-County Rails-to-Trails Association

c/o Love's Canoe - Main Street, Ridgway , PA 15853; 814-776-6285

3.3 Eastern Promenade Trail – Portland, Maine

The Eastern Promenade Trail is a paved bicycle path established in 1997 along the waterfront in Portland, Maine. The trail is 2.1 miles in length and goes from India Street to Tukey's Bridge, and it is mostly flat with one small rise near the bridge. For a distance of 1.75 miles, the Eastern Promenade Trail is parallel to the Maine Narrow Gauge excursion train operated by the Maine DOT. There are 6 trains per day in the summer and 1-2 per day in the winter, and the trains operate at a speed of approximately 10 miles per hour. The width of the corridor is 90 feet and the width of the trail is 12 feet. The distance from the track to the trail is 6 feet with no barriers separating track and trail. The trail has one at-grade crossing with warning signs. Uses allowed on the paved trail include bicycling and roller-blading. A separate dirt pedestrian path also occupies the same right of way.

Most Relevant Features:

- Frequency of trains: 6 trains per day summer; 1-2 trains per day winter
- Type of rail use: excursion
- Train speed: 10 mph
- Distance from track to trail: 6 feet
- Barriers between track and trail: none

- At-grade crossings: 1 with warning signs
- Trail surface: paved (separate dirt pedestrian path)
- Uses: bicycling, roller-blading, walking, x-country skiing
- Other: wheelchair accessible, dogs allowed on leash, stroller-friendly

http://www.trails.org/map_files/eastern_prom_page_description.html (description, maps, photos)

<http://www.destinationmaine.com/summer/prom.htm> (description, photo)

Portland Trails - One India Street, Portland, Maine 04101; 207-775-2411; email: info@trails.org

3.4 Fillmore Trail – Fillmore, California

The Fillmore Trail, a 2-mile recreation path in Fillmore, California, is adjacent to tracks owned by the Ventura County Transportation Commission. The Fillmore & Western Railroad operates recreational trains 4 days per week, but train use does not coincide with peak use of the trail. The width of the corridor is 100 feet and the width of the trail is 10 feet. The distance from the track to the trail is 30 feet with a wood rail fence serving as a barrier separating track and trail. Uses allowed on the paved trail include bicycling, walking and inline skating, and the path is wheelchair accessible.

Most Relevant Features:

- Frequency of trains: 4 trains per day
- Type of rail use: recreational
- Train speed: 15 mph
- Distance from track to trail: 30 feet
- Barriers between track and trail: rod rail fence
- Trail surface: paved
- Uses: bicycling, inline skating, walking
- Other: wheelchair accessible

<http://www.fillmoreca.com/points.htm> (brief description, photo)

Contact: Roy Payne, email: rpaynefillmore@hotmail.com

City of Fillmore, 250 Central Avenue, Fillmore, CA 93015; 805-524-3701

3.5 Heritage Rail-Trail County Park – York, Pennsylvania to Maryland State Line

Established in 1992 and covering 176 acres, the Heritage Rail Trail County Park is 21 miles long and runs north from the Mason Dixon line just south of the Borough of New Freedom through Glen Rock and Hanover Junction to the Colonial Courthouse in the City of York. The trail connects to Maryland's 20-mile long North Central Railroad Trail. The County of York purchased the rail corridor in 1990 through a special agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. The North Central Railway, Inc. operates 2 excursion trains per day at speeds of 20 mph. The trail width is 12 feet and the distance from track to trail is 6 feet. The only barrier used between track and trail is on bridges and consists of an 8-foot high fence. The trail has 13 at-grade crossings marked with warning signs which state: "Since the railway is operational, please stay clear of tracks at all times and cross only at established crossings." The most popular activities on the trail are hiking, jogging, bicycle riding and horseback riding, and the trail is wheelchair accessible with a crushed stone surface.

Most Relevant Features:

- Frequency of trains: 2 trains per day

- Type of rail use: excursion
- Train speed: 20 mph
- Distance from track to trail: 6 feet
- Barriers between track and trail: yes, only on bridges, 8-foot fence
- At-grade crossings: 13 with warning signs
- Trail surface: crushed stone
- Uses: bicycling, hiking, horseback riding, walking
- Other: wheelchair accessible, dawn to dusk operation, pets must be leashed and owners must clean up after their pets

<http://www.york-county.org/gov/AUTH/RailTrail.htm> (description, map, photos, mileage table)

<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/rails/yorkchrt.html> (description, photo)

<http://www.york-county.org/gov/AUTH/HRTTour.htm> (slide show - virtual tour online)

York County Parks - 400 Mundis Race Road, York, PA 17402; 717 840-7440

3.6 Duluth Lakefront Boardwalk – Duluth, Minnesota

The Duluth Lakefront Boardwalk, along the Lake Superior shoreline in Duluth, Minnesota, consists of approximately 3 miles of paved trail and about 0.75 miles of wooden walkway. It extends from Canal Park to 26th Avenue East near London Road. For 3.2 miles, the trail runs parallel to tracks which carry tourist trains traveling at a speed of 15 mph, at times as often as one train per hour. Information on the corridor width is unavailable, but the trail width is 8 feet and the distance from track to trail is 15 feet. A wrought iron fence is used as a barrier, and there is one at-grade crossing. Uses allowed include biking, walking, running and roller-blading, and the path is wheelchair accessible.

Most Relevant Features:

- Frequency of trains: sometimes as often as 1 per hour
- Type of rail use: tourist
- Train speed: 15 mph
- Distance from track to trail: 15 feet
- Barriers between track and trail: yes, wrought iron fence
- At-grade crossings: 1 with warning signs
- Trail surface: paved trail and wooden walkway
- Uses: bicycling, roller-blading, running, walking
- Other: wheelchair accessible

<http://www.d.umn.edu/student/active/attract/board.html> (brief description, photos)

<http://inlineskating.about.com/recreation/inlineskating/library/weekly/aa-duluth-lakewalk.htm> (brief description, many photos)

Duluth Department of Parks and Recreation, Phone: 218-723-3337

Director: Carl Seehus, email: cseehus@ci.duluth.mn.us

3.7 (South) Platte River Greenway Trail – Denver, Colorado

The Platte River Greenway trail extends 28.5 miles south from Confluence Park in Denver to Chatfield State Park. From Confluence Park south, the trail's northernmost section is along both the east and west banks of the Platte. Along the west bank, the trail parallels a section of the old Denver and Rio Grande railway that now runs a scenic rail car service. For 2.5 miles, the trail parallels tracks that provide a scenic rail service from the Denver Children's Museum. Trains operated by the Denver Rail Heritage Society run as often as 2 times per hour at a speed of 10 miles per hour. The corridor width is 60 feet, the trail width is 8 feet, and the distance from track to trail is 30 feet. Four at-grade crossings with warning signs exist along this section of trail, and there is no barrier between track and trail. Uses allowed include biking, inline skating, cross-country skiing, walking and running, and the path is wheelchair accessible.

Most Relevant Features:

- Frequency of trains: 2 trains per hour
- Type of rail use: recreational transit
- Train speed: 10 mph
- Distance from track to trail: 30 feet
- Barriers between track and trail: none
- At-grade crossings: 4 with warning signs
- Trail surface: paved (concrete)
- Uses: bicycling, inline skating, running, walking, x-country skiing
- Other: wheelchair accessible

<http://www.zyworld.com/RkyMtnSk8r/Platte1.htm> (description, map, photos)

<http://www.denverrolley.org/pictures/pvtpath.gif> (photo of train, tracks, path and bicyclists)

3.8 Santa Fe Rail-Trail – Santa Fe to Lamy, New Mexico

When the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway entered New Mexico in 1878, rough terrain caused it to bypass Santa Fe altogether. Dismayed merchants and local citizens got organized and established an 18-mile branch from Lamy within two years, thus linking the railway to Santa Fe. After years of illicit use by bikers, hikers and equestrians, the 18-mile Santa Fe Rail-Trail was officially opened to public access on June 6, 1998. The Santa Fe Southern Railway runs 6-8 excursion trains (that also carry freight) per week from April to October, with an abbreviated schedule during the winter. Bicyclists can make a return trip to Santa Fe from Lamy in a restored 1920's passenger coach. One-way fares for bicyclists and hikers are \$15. The trail has three at-grade crossings. A minimum distance of 20 feet from rail to trail edge is adopted for insurance and safety reasons, although this distance may be reduced with positive separation where necessary. Uses include walking, biking and equestrian.

Most Relevant Features:

- Frequency of trains: freight-2 per day, excursion-6 per week
- Type of rail use: excursion/freight
- Train speed: 40 mph
- Distance from track to trail: 5 feet one source; 20 feet another, reduced with positive separation in places
- Barriers between track and trail: none

- At-grade crossings: 3
- Trail surface: gravel
- Uses: bicycling, equestrian, walking/hiking
- Other: return trip by train possible

<http://www.insiders.com/santafe/main-parks3.htm> (description - see 4th paragraph)

<http://www.railspot.com/gif/mail/railspot/may99/msg00389.html> (account of personal trip)

Trail information: 505-986-6215 or 505-438-7542.

Contact: Janie Bosworth, 505-988-1996.

4 Preliminary Engineering Report and Cost Estimate for the Path

4.1 **Field Assessment**

On October 19, 2000, the research team completed a one-day engineering assessment of possible routes for a recreational path linking Saranac Lake and Lake Placid. Along with Tim Holmes of Holmes & Associates, the field research team consisted of Vincent McClelland and Russell G. Pittenger of LA Group, Landscape Architecture and Engineering. Mr. McClelland, a resource, land use and community planner with over 20 years of experience, specializes in the Adirondack environment. He manages the LA Group's branch office in Keene Valley, NY and serves as project manager for the firm's North Country projects. Mr. McClelland is one of the authors of the Keene/North Elba Safety and Recreation Path Final Report (1996), which first proposed in detail the construction of a path within the railroad corridor. Mr. Pittenger, RLA, has over 25 years of experience in all phases of site analysis and design including master planning, site studies, conditions surveys, environmental assessment, cost estimating and construction documentation for a wide variety of project types. Mr. Pittenger has extensive experience with regulatory compliance and has been responsible for the design, specification and construction administration of mitigation wetlands for a number of projects.

We were also fortunate to be accompanied by William Longwell, Senior Landscape Architect and Environmental Coordinator with the New York State Department of Transportation, Design Services Bureau, Albany office.

The research team walked a majority of the railroad corridor, including the section from Ray Brook to the Lake Placid train station. We drove a majority of the remainder of the route between Ray Brook and the Saranac Lake train station that was accessible by road. We also rode the train between Lake Placid and Saranac Lake in both directions. The train traveled at an average speed of 25 miles per hour, providing an opportunity to gain additional perspective on the route. While aboard the train, we discussed rails-with-trails issues with some of the staff of the Adirondack Railroad.

4.2 **Summary of the Main Findings of the Engineering Field Assessment**

The attached tables outline the major findings of the preliminary engineering assessment. The railroad corridor between Lake Placid and Saranac Lake is approximately nine miles long and is 50 to 100 feet wide.

Table 1 provides the linear feet of path in each of 15 sections of the path between Lake Placid (starting at Averyville Road, just west of the train station) and Saranac Lake (ending at the intersection of Pine Street and River Street, just east of the Pine Ridge Cemetery). For each section, linear feet of path is indicated for each of five trail types: on grade (i.e., within the corridor at furthest distance from the rail line), on

slope (on the slope leading up to the railroad bed), on shoulder (next to the railroad line), boardwalk, and bridging. Also indicated are the path sections with road crossings.

A total of 43,700 linear feet are accounted for, or approximately 8.3 miles of recreational path. Of that amount, 56 percent are on grade, the easiest and most inexpensive to construct. The next major portion of path, 30 percent of the total number of linear feet, is on shoulder has and will have added costs for grading and safety fencing. According to this preliminary assessment there is a need for 4,600 feet of boardwalk, or about 9/10's of a mile, primarily to protect wetlands. As seen in Table 3, that is the most expensive trail type, with an estimated cost of \$1 million for board walk. Approximately 200 feet of bridging will be required as well.

As shown in Table 2, the engineering team established cost ranges for each trail type based on a variety of construction activities within each type. For example, more extensive grading and drainage will be required when the path is on slope, while fencing will be required when the path is on shoulder.

Table 3 presents the cost estimate for the recreational path by trail type, based on the data in Tables 1 and 2. The total cost of the path is estimated at between \$2.1 and \$3.0 million. As noted above, board walk is

TRAIL SECTION	PATH ON GRADE	PATH ON SLOPE	PATH ON SHOULDER	BOARD WALK	ROAD BRIDGE CROSSING	TOTAL LINEAR FEET	PERCENT
1	550 LF	1,000 LF		200 LF 100 LF 400 LF 250 LF	X 100 LF	2,600	6%
2	250 LF 1,800 LF 850 LF				X	2,900	7%
3	2,000 LF			1000 LF		3,000	7%
4	2,000 LF			300 LF		3,200	7%
5			900 LF			3,150	7%
6			3150 LF			3,150	7%
7			3350 LF			3,350	8%
8	1,250 LF		1900 LF			3,150	7%
9	2,200 LF 700 LF				100 LF	3,000	7%
10	3,250 LF					3,250	7%
11	1,600 LF 800 LF			800 LF		3,200	7%
12			400 LF 550 LF	500 LF 400 LF	X	2,900	7%
13	3300 LF					3,300	8%
14	650 LF 1,650 LF			650 LF	X	2,950	7%
15	200 LF 400 LF				X	600	1%
TOTALS	24,500 LF	1,000 LF	13,400 LF	4,600 LF	200 LF	43,700	
Percents	56%	2%	30%	11%	1%		

one of the more costly aspects of building the path within the corridor. The board walk is needed to both protect the wetland areas along the corridor and to extend use of the path throughout the year by keeping

Table 2	
UNIT COSTS FOR TRAIL TYPES	
1 Path on Grade	
\$3/LF	Clear and Grub
\$12-22	Surface (Stonedust - Asphalt)
\$5/LF	Grading/Drainage
<u>\$20-40/LF</u>	
2 Path on Slope	
\$5/LF	Clear and Grub
\$15/LF	Grade/Drainage
\$1/LF	Safety Rail (as required)
\$12-22/LF	Surface
<u>\$33-43/LF</u>	
3 Path on Shoulder	
\$25/LF	Grade
\$5/LF	Fence
\$1/LF	Silt Fence
\$10-20	Surface
<u>\$41-51/LF</u>	
4 Boardwalk	
\$25/SF	Deck
<u>\$200-250/LF</u>	
5 Bridge	
Hang off Existing:	
<u>\$300/LF</u>	
New Span:	
\$62/SF for 100' span	
x8' wide	
<u>\$500/LF</u>	
6 Road Crossings	
Allow \$250 each	

it high and dry during wet seasons. There are possible cost savings in constructing board walk by use of volunteer labor, using donated materials and possibly by re-routing the path onto Forest Preserve lands outside the corridor. The Saranac Lakes Wild Forest Unit Management Plan (UMP) is scheduled for renewal in 2001-2002 and new trail development can be considered during the planning process.

5 Overview of the Recreational Path by Half-Mile Section

Following are brief descriptions of each path section outlined above. The descriptions begin on the Lake Placid end of the corridor, with the first section starting on the west side of Averyville Road across from the end of the rail yard.

5.1 **Section 1: Chubb River – Old Military Road, Lake Placid (to Mile .5)**

This section is 2,600 linear feet long (.5 miles) and includes a 100-foot bridge across the Chubb River just east of the Fire Station. This section requires 950 feet of boardwalk to cross a small creek just west of Averyville road and to cross the wetland area leading up to the bridge crossing. It also requires 100 feet of bridging to cross the Chubb River. This is a very scenic section of the path because it skirts along the Chubb River, providing nice views of the opposite shore and the

mountains beyond. It is especially attractive and valuable because it is within the Village of Lake Placid and is easily accessible from Averyville Road. The path would be located on the south side of the tracks, where it likely would remain for the majority of its length to Saranac Lake.

5.2 **Section 2: West of Old Military Road (to Mile 1.2)**

All of the path is on grade in this section and follows the primarily flat section of the corridor on the south side of the tracks. There are two culvert extensions in this section. The road crossing that begins the section would require signage both on the path and on the road. The path signage would require that bicyclists stop and dismount to cross the road. The road signage would warn motorists to slow for the trail crossing. It would be prudent to reduce speeds on this section of road or to extend the Slow School Zone out past this trail crossing.

5.3 **Section 3: Chubb River Meadows 1 (to Mile 1.8)**

This section is .57 miles long (3,000 ft) and includes the beginning of the scenic river and meadow area of the route only one mile from Old Military Road. This section encompasses a series of streams and ponds that provide scenic views, wild flower patches and bird viewing opportunities that are among the best in the Tri-Lakes area. One third of the path in this section requires boardwalk to protect wetlands. There are three culvert extensions.

5.4 Section 4: Chubb River Meadows 2 (to Mile 2.6)

This section takes in the remainder of the river meadow area. The path continues on the south side of the tracks and there are three culvert extension. An estimated 300 feet of boardwalk will be required in this section, with the remainder of the path on grade. This is a great location for benches and interpretive signage to enhance the experience.

5.5 Section 5: Down the Hill (to Mile 3.2)

Construction of this section is estimated to be entirely on the shoulder of the track bed. Fencing may be recommended or required here when the distance between the tracks and path narrows. An alternate path to the north of the tracks could be explored here, as could an alternate path to the south side of the wetland area. This section of path starts the slight downhill grade towards Saranac Lake.

TOTAL BUDGET SUMMARY			
Trail Type	Linear Feet	Total Cost Low End	Total Cost High End
1 Path on Grade	24,500	\$490,000	\$980,000
2 Path on Slope	1,000	33,000	43,000
3 Path on Shoulder	13,400	550,000	680,000
4 Board Walk	4,600	920,000	1,150,000
5 Bridge	200	60,000	100,000
6 Road Crossings	5*	<u>1,000</u>	<u>1,000</u>
		\$2,054,000	\$2,954,000

* Number of road crossings.

5.6 Section 6: Power Lines (to Mile 3.8)

This section is .60 miles in length and is similar to Section 5 in the need to put the path on the shoulder. The corridor narrows here because of wetlands and fencing will likely be needed in portions of this section. There are power lines along this stretch providing a wider alternative for the path. The path continues on the south side of the tracks.

5.7 Section 7: Haystack/McKenzie Link (to Mile 4.4)

This section is very similar to the prior two, with the path continuing on the shoulder to skirt wetland areas. There are scenic opportunities here as the path parallels a wilder section of Ray Brook. There is also a trail entering on the north side that connects the corridor to Highway 86, just east of the trailhead for Haystack and McKenzie Mountains. This section also begins to border on the Saranac Lake Golf Course.

5.8 Section 8: Golf Course (to Mile 5.0)

This section continues on the south side of the golf course. Opportunities for visiting the Club House for refreshments are possible here. The corridor becomes wider and flattens, allowing the path to be built on grade for 1,250 feet (.24 miles) in this section.

5.9 Section 9: Scarface/Meadowbrook Campground (to Mile 5.6)

This more level section of the corridor provides ample room for building the path on grade. A bridge would need to be constructed in this section over a stream flowing into Ray Brook Pond. An alternate route here is to take the Scarface trail to Ray Brook Drive and then follow widened shoulders through the Ray Brook area. There are two significant recreation links in this section of path. One is the intersection of the recreational path and the Scarface trail. The Scarface trail is a popular Mountain Biking trail in the area. In addition, NYS DEC is reconstructing a trail from that Scarface trail intersection to Meadowbrook Campground on Route 86. Tail O' the Pup is located on that trail as well as other businesses, providing a business tie-in to the recreational path. The DEC trail will also connect to the DEC Region 5 headquarters, APA; and businesses along Route 86 in Ray Brook

5.10 Section 10: Ray Brook (to Mile 6.1)

Section 10 of the path goes through Ray Brook, where the corridor is relatively flat and this entire section can be built on grade. A portion of the path could be moved to widened shoulders on Ray Brook Drive. The remains of a sidewalk on the north side of the road can still be seen in places.

5.11 Section 11: Big Bend (to Mile 6.7)

Section 11 requires approximately 800 feet of boardwalk to protect a wetland area on the south side of the tracks just north(west?) of the bend coming out of Ray Brook towards route 86. After traveling west for most of its length, the railroad corridor now turns sharply to the north.

5.12 Section 12: The Tracks (to Mile 7. 2)

This section brings the path up to Route 86 where the tracks cross the highway. This is a location where flower, fruit and vegetable dealers set up their stands. Approximately 950 feet of this section has to be built on the shoulder of the railroad bed as the bed drops off steeply in those areas. 900 feet of boardwalk is also required in this section. Once at the Route 86 crossing, users of the path could travel along Route 86 into Saranac Lake or cross the highway and continue along the corridor. Reconstruction of Route 86 is planned for the next few years and the Village of Saranac Lake is working with NYSDOT on the design to include a recreational path from the tracks to Riverside Park. This would provide an opportunity for a loop with the final three sections of the railroad corridor recreational path.

5.13 Section 13: Will Rogers (to Mile 7.8)

A dirt road comprises the majority of this section of the path, allowing the entire section to be built on grade. Remaining on the south (now west) side of the tracks, the path will border on the Saranac Village at Will Rogers residence, providing recreational walking and bicycling opportunities to the residents.

5.14 Section 14: McKenzie Slough/NCCC (to Mile 8.3)

This section is among the most scenic areas on the corridor. It follows along the upper end of McKenzie Slough and provides great opportunities for birding. Moreover, as is the case with the Chubb River section in Lake Placid, it is especially valuable because it is so close to the village. The corridor is relatively flat on the south (west) side along this section. Approximately 650 feet of boardwalk will be required and possibly a bridge across the inlet to McKenzie Slough. After crossing the inlet, the path will shift to the north (east) side of the tracks for the first time since beginning in Lake Placid. There is a road along the corridor between the inlet and North Country Community College, making it the logical location for the path.

5.15 Section 15: NCCC/River Street, Saranac Lake (to Mile 8.5)

The final section that has been identified for this feasibility study brings the path to River Street about two blocks from Riverside Park. At this point, path users can turn right onto Pine Street or McKenzie Pond Road and travel relatively quiet roads to their destination, or travel to Riverside Park and link into the sidewalks along Route 86. The reconstruction plans for Route 86 could include a bicycle/pedestrian-friendly linkage between Riverside Park and the railroad corridor.

6 Future Description of the Saranac Lake-Lake Placid Recreational Path

6.1 *Yet to be Named* Lake Placid-Saranac Lake Recreational Path, New York

The *Yet to be Named* Saranac Lake-Lake Placid Path is a rail-with-trail established in 2002 and located along the Adirondack Railroad corridor between Saranac Lake and Lake Placid, NY in Essex County.

The 8.5-mile multi-use path begins within the Village of Lake Placid at the railroad depot and continues through Adirondack Park Wild Forest Lands and into the Village of Saranac Lake. The trail parallels the state-owned railway tracks where the Adirondack Railroad operates the Adirondack High Peaks Wilderness Train on a seasonal basis. The railroad operates three trains per day Thursday thru Sunday in mid-Summer and on weekends in the spring and fall. There are opportunities for rail/trail excursions for hiking or biking one way and returning by train. The path provides a family bicycling experience for traveling between two historic communities. The path is also an alternate transportation route, allowing the over 1,000 people employed in Ray Brook (the half-way point along the path) to commute from Saranac Lake and Lake Placid by bicycle - a ½-hour bike ride. Athletes training in Lake Placid at the Olympic facilities use the path for training runs and bike rides. Bicycle rentals are available at five bicycle shops located in the Lake Placid-Saranac Lake area.

The 100 foot-wide rail corridor passes through forest and forest meadow environment for a majority of its length. The wetlands and open meadows along the route provide scenic views of surrounding mountains and opportunities for birding and viewing wildlife. The corridor borders on a golf course near the half-way point where there is also a short trail linkage to restaurants and convenience stores. The trail width is 10 feet, and the distance between track and trail is 8 feet at its closest point and up to 25 feet in places. Where the track and trail are less than 11 feet apart, there is a four-foot high fence. The path provides the opportunity for a variety of outdoor recreational experiences including walking, jogging, bicycling and cross-country skiing. The stone dust surface is handicapped accessible to accommodate everyone regardless of physical ability and portions of the path may be paved. Scenic views of ponds and wetland areas are available within the first two miles at each end of the 8.5 mile path.

Main Features:

- Frequency of trains: 3 trains per day, seasonally
- Type of rail use: tourism
- Train speed: 25 mph
- Distance from track to trail: varies from 8 to 25 feet
- Barriers between track and trail: 4 foot fencing where trail is less than 11 feet from track
- Trail surface: portions within villages are paved, remainder stone dust
- Uses: bicycling, running, walking, x-country skiing
- Other: wheelchair accessible in villages, rail/trail excursions possible

<http://www.bikeadironacks.org/newtrails.html> (description)

Lake Placid Visitors Bureau – Lake Placid, New York

Saranac Lake Area Chamber of Commerce – Saranac Lake, New York

7 Benefits of the Lake Placid-Saranac Lake Recreational Path

Dedicated bicycle paths are highly desirable destinations for an increasing number of people. Residents of the Lake Placid-Saranac Lake area currently travel to Stowe, Vermont to use their five-mile trail. Families looking for a bicycling experience have limited opportunities in the area and will often ask in local bicycle shops, “where is the bicycle path.” With a dedicated path, families will extend their visits in the area and make special visits to the area. A dedicated path also creates opportunities for new events in the region such as community to community bicycle rides and races. Events can be timed for shoulder seasons, when motels and restaurants have less business, thereby accentuating the economic impact of the path. Events have an added benefit of increasing word of mouth advertising as some participants experience the area for the first time, resulting in future visits by themselves and their family and friends.

As people spend more time on trails, they are also spending more money, both near the trails and on their way to them. Establishments respond to the purchasing power of cyclists, walkers, runners and others by orienting their merchandise, advertising and service toward trail users. Bicyclists need special clothes, shoes and equipment for running, hiking, biking, and skiing. Some buy souvenirs and other items during the trip, or combine the bicycling experience with another type of revenue-generating activity, such as canoeing, hiking, shopping and visiting Olympic venues. Bicycle rentals are a profitable aspect of the bicycle business, and the incidence of bicycle rentals increases considerable when family-oriented bicycle paths are present.

There have been a number of studies on the economic benefits of bicycle paths to local communities. For example, a study done in Pennsylvania, the Allegheny Valley Rail-Trails Feasibility and Development Plan, assessed the economic impacts of bicyclists to the local economy (Lord and Strauss 1994). Based on survey data, users of the Oil Creek State Park trail spent an average of \$25.85 per person per day (PP/PD) for a total economic impact of \$1.8 million annually. Two-thirds of the 22,700 visitors in 1991 came from out-of-state.

In a 1992 National Park Service report, *The Impact of Rail Trails: A Study of Users and Property Owners from Three Trails*, the economic impacts of trail users were measured (Moore et. al. 1992). This NPS report described the impacts of three trails, in Florida, California, and Iowa. The daily average expenditures per person were: \$3.97 (CA), \$9.21 (IA), and \$11.02 (FL). Overall the economic benefits were substantial with users numbering in the hundreds of thousands for each trail. Results also showed slight increases in property values to adjacent landowners with minimal problems cited by landowners.

A Midwest study, *A Look at Visitors on Wisconsin's Elroy Sparta-Trail Bike Trail*, examined numerous aspects about trail visitors and found that the average daily expenditure per person was \$25.14 for 50,000 annual users (Recreation Resources Center 1988). Those utilizing local lodging establishments spent the most, while campers spent the least. This 21 mile trail is now part of a 200 mile bikeway providing positive economic benefits to a wide geographic area.

Another Wisconsin study, *The Economic Impact of Bike Trails: A Case Study of the Sugar River Trail* (Lawson 1986) concluded that communities that are intersected by this trail enjoy substantial economic benefit from nonresident use, with nonresident's average daily expenditures (\$10.21) nearly twice as high as residents (\$5.44). There were nearly 59,000 users in 1985.

Studies of the Summit County, Colorado recreation trail system found that an estimated \$4.3 million was spent in 1989 by people using the trail system, primarily for bicycling. The average expenditure per person per day was \$50.56 for all respondents, while the average for out-of-state users was \$99.66 per day. Approximately 16% of the users were from out-of-state. The number of users on the pathway increased an average of 28% per year between 1986 and 1990. The pathway user count was projected at 212,779 in 1991 (Summit County Community Development Department 1989, 1991).

Within the Adirondack North Country Region, a detailed economic analysis of the GEAR '92 event (Great Eastern Rally of the League of American Wheelmen) held in Canton, New York August 7-10, 1992, found that the average participant spent \$232. That translates to a per person, per day average of \$77. The total direct economic impact in the community of the 1,378 participants was \$319,696. The average income of participants was about \$60,000 (Lally 1992).

A study done on property values, *Evaluation of the Burke-Gilman Trail's Effect on Property Values and Crime* done by the Seattle Engineering Department (1986) concluded that property near the trail was

significantly easier to sell and that it sells for more -- averaging 6% higher -- compared to similar land not near the trail. In addition, minimal problems were reported by adjacent landowners.

One study looked beyond expenditures, to the economic benefits of bicycling to individuals, communities, and society. An analysis done for the Minnesota State Bicycle Plan (Minnesota Department of Transportation 1992) attempted to calculate the financial savings from increased use of bicycles. The premise is that each additional mile traveled by bicycle for shopping, school, commuting, etc., is one less mile traveled by automobile, resulting in less gasoline consumption, less pollution, fewer auto repairs, less wear-and-tear on roads, etc. The savings per bicycle mile traveled is estimated to be as high as \$1.64 per bicycle mile traveled, allocated as follows: out-of-pocket savings to consumers (\$.58), highway capital investment savings (\$.84), and taxes and other general public savings (\$.22).

Applying those findings to the Saranac Lake-Lake Placid path, and using an estimated four-mile commute per day each way by bicycle in a five day work week and multiplying the resulting 168 miles of commuting per month by a six-month bicycling season in the North Country region, that would equal 1,000 miles of commuting by bike during a calendar year. With the estimated cost savings of \$1.64 per mile, the savings per bicyclist would total \$1,640. If at least 100 people of the 1,000 who work in Ray Brook decided to commute to work by bicycle on the new recreational path -- which doesn't have to be the same 100 people every day -- the total cost savings to the individuals and to our communities would be least \$160,000. Now that the price of gasoline is approaching \$2.00 per gallon, that 1992-based economic impact might be too conservative; and, there are health and physical fitness benefits as well to the individuals exercising by bike.

Overall, these studies demonstrate the positive economic impact of bicyclists, bicycling and bicycle paths on local economies. Local merchants in restaurants, retail stores, bike shops, and in the lodging industry will feel the benefits most directly. By linking two vibrant communities by bike and by rail and offering the opportunity to bike one way and train the other, the area will have a new attraction that will encompass a half- to a full-day of activity and be appropriate for all ages and a wide range of physical abilities. Once on their bicycles in either community, families will bike around taking in the sights, having lunch, and doing some shopping. This enhancement to bicycling within and between both communities will encourage people out of their cars and onto bicycles, bring them closer to the stores and eateries that want their business and with the major advantage of not having to find a parking spot on busy Village streets.

The Stowe Bicycle Path in Stowe, Vermont is probably the closest and most comparable bicycle path of which we are aware. Residents in the Lake Placid/Saranac Lake area travel to Stowe just to ride their path, and it is widely recognized as a tourist attraction in and of itself. As with Stowe, the Saranac Lake/Lake Placid area is a popular, year-around tourism destination. The path proposed here will have a similar appeal and its use could equal that of the Stowe Path. For example, in the early 1990s it was reported that the Stowe bicycle path experienced 3,000 riders a day during a Labor Day weekend. That level of use, if attained here, would rival any other tourist attraction in the area.

The concluding paragraphs in this section provide a preliminary comparison of economic costs and benefits of the recreational path. In terms of economic benefits, the 61 Rails with Trails Report finds that on 35 of 61 of the trails the average number of users annually was 240,000 users. The range of user numbers varied widely from 16,000 to 1.5 million users per year. If we conservatively projected user numbers for the Saranac Lake-Lake Placid path at the low end of that range, 16,000 users in a six-month bicycling season would equal an average of 88 users per day. With 10 to 12 hours of daylight during the non-winter months, that would indicate 7 to 9 people an hour on the 8.5 miles of trail, or about one user per mile of trail during the day light hours in the six month period. According to the economic benefit surveys reported on above, the average bicycle path user spends between \$10 and \$50 per day. As shown in Table 4, the direct economic impact of 16,000 path users a year could range from \$160,000 to

\$800,000 per year. That would be in addition to the estimated \$160,000 in savings and benefits related to people commuting to work by bicycle on the path, as highlighted above.

Turning to cost of the path, it is estimated that the cost of building a recreational path between Saranac Lake and Lake Placid could be in the range of \$2 to \$3 million. If TEA-21 Enhancement funds were allocated to the project, a 20% match would be required by NYSDOT, resulting in a necessary match of \$400,000 to \$600,000 in some combination of services, staff time and cash.

If we consider the high cost estimate of \$3 million dollars with a \$600,000 match and the lowest economic benefit of \$160,000 per year in tourist expenditures and \$160,000 per year in cost savings attributable to residents commuting by bicycle, the local match cost would be recovered in the local economy within the first two years. The remain cost of the path would be State and Federal spending coming into the area and would have economic benefits, such as locally hired workers and non-local worker spending on food and accommodations, that would likely equal or exceed the proportion of locally collected State and Federal tax dollars contributing to the \$3 million funding allocation.

\$\$ Spent per Day	Estimated Number of Users Annually				
	<u>16,000</u>	<u>50,000</u>	<u>100,000</u>	<u>150,000</u>	<u>200,000</u>
\$10	\$160,000	\$500,000	\$1,000,000	\$1,500,000	\$2,000,000
\$25	\$400,000	\$1,250,000	\$2,500,000	\$3,750,000	\$5,000,000
\$50	\$800,000	\$2,500,000	\$5,000,000	\$7,500,000	\$10,000,000
			Total Cost of Recreational Path		
	Low Estimate		\$2 million	20% match	\$400,000
	High Estimate		\$3 million		\$600,000

8 Public Meeting and Next Steps

8.1 **Public Meeting Summary**

ANCA sponsored a public meeting on June 7, 2001 at the Hotel Saranac in Saranac Lake to present the findings of this feasibility study and to discuss next steps with interested citizens, business owners, public officials and others. Seventy people attended the three-hour meeting, representing thirty-six different organizations (see Table 5). The first hour of the meeting was devoted to presentations by participants in the preliminary feasibility study and engineering assessment. Also during the first hour, Craig Della Penna, the New England representative for the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, gave a slide presentation on rails-with-trails projects and the benefits of bicycle paths in the Northeast. During the next hour, representative from various local governments and state government agencies were called on to provide information on the proposed recreational path from their perspective. The final hour of the meeting was an open discussion and question / answer session on various aspects of building and maintain a path connecting Saranac Lake and Lake Placid. Following is a brief summary of some of the comments. It

should be noted that these were all verbal comments based on the best assessment and recall of the speakers, so specific information and data within a comment may be approximate.

- Don Robertson of the NYS Department of Transportation discussed Enhancements Funding is one of the more likely sources of funds for a recreational path project such as the one proposed here. However, the annual Enhancements funding has become more limited in recent years with a significant portion of the funding being dedicated to the Erie Canal Trail. In the last round of Enhancements funding, \$4 million was allocated to the region. There were 60 proposals and 10 were funded. Formal announcement for the TEA-21 Enhancement funding will occur soon, proposals will be due in the Fall and announcement of funded projects will likely occur in June, 2002.
- Pete Howard of the NYSDOT elaborated that bicycle paths are generally at least ten feet in width. TEA-21 grants require that a 20% local match be provided to the project. The match can be in-kind service, use of staff time and equipment, as well as cash. A local match can exceed the 20% minimum and higher matches can improve chances for funding.
- Karyn Richards of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) pointed out that it may be possible to construct a portion of the path outside of the railroad corridor on Saranac Wild Forest lands, if all NYSDEC rules and regulations are complied with. The Unit Management Plan for the Saranac Wild Forest Unit will soon be underway. During the planning process is the time to discuss construction of new trails or modification of existing trails.
- Steven Guglielmi is the Saranac Lake Wild Forest Unit Plan manager for NYSDEC. He pointed out after that meeting that some of the major concerns of the NYSDEC will include: trail location, wetlands, trail width, trail surface and signage. Under current law, trail width is limited to eight feet and no paving of the trail surface would be allowed. In addition to the possibility of having the path leave the railroad corridor, loop trails could possibly be added during the Unit Management Planning process that would link off the path and provide additional mountain biking opportunities in the Lake Placid / Saranac Lake area.
- In terms of wetlands, the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) has jurisdiction, according to Steve Erman of the APA. If there are stream crossings, the Army Corps of Engineers may be involved.

Table 5: Thirty-Seven Organizations Represented at the June 7, 2001 Public Meeting on the Proposed Recreational Path

Adirondack Medical Center
Adirondack Park Mountain Biking Initiative
Adirondack Park Agency
Adirondack Railroad
Adirondack Ski Touring Council
Country Business Services
Essex County Public Health
Federal Correctional - Ray Brook
High Peaks Cyclery
Historic Saranac Lake
Holmes & Associates
Kiwanis Club of Saranac Lake
LA Group
Lake Placid Joint Planning Commission
Lake Placid Planning Board
Lake Placid Visitors Bureau
Leepoff Cyclery
North Elba Historical Society
North Elba Park District
NYS Bicycle Coalition
NYS Dept of Environmental Conservation
NYS Dept of Transportation
NYS Empire State Development Corp
Olympic Regional Development Authority
Pine Ridge Cemetery Association
Placid Planet Bicycle Shop
Plattsburgh Press Republican
Rails to Trails Conservancy
Rotary Club
Saranac Lake Chamber of Commerce
The Philadelphia Grass Co.
Town of Harrietstown
Town of North Elba
U.S. Olympic Training Center
Village of Lake Placid
Village of Saranac Lake
Wildlife Conservation Society

One advantage to taking the path away from the corridor is to go around wetlands and avoid impacting wetland areas. If the path leaves the railroad corridor it may by necessity have different characteristics than when it is within the railroad corridor. For example, it may be narrower and a dirt trail outside the corridor, while it might be at least ten feet wide and possibly paved in locations within the corridor.

- Ivan Vamos, representing the New York State Bicycle Coalition recognized that a path such as the one proposed here is sorely needed in the area. Kids need alternatives, tourists need alternatives and athletes in training need alternatives to the busy highways that they all now have to use. Considering the cost of a serious injury to someone bicycling along our highways, a minimum of 20 injuries avoided would essentially “pay” for the cost of this path.
- Safety is the number one concern to the Adirondack Railroad’s general manager Peter Gores, so the railroad can support a plan only if it ensures the safety of the people using the path and the train. Separation of the path and tracks is key. Little boys love trains, so we need separation to discourage pedestrians on the tracks. An alternative, dedicated path – safely marked and fenced – is a great idea because it would encourage people to stay off the tracks. They could feasibly haul bicycles for people between Saranac Lake and Lake Placid, as we now haul canoes down in the Old Forge area for people paddling the Moose River, but it is expensive to add a baggage car so will have to consider the costs and the market for the service. There are abandoned railroad lines in the area, especially North of Saranac Lake and up towards Malone that could be better promoted as bicycle routes.
- Tony Goodwin, of the Adirondack Ski Touring Council related that the council is currently considering the possibility of developing and promoting bicycle trails along with our work on ski trails. Many new considerations and issues that arise with bicycle trails. For example, a ski trail over private land is visible only in the winter and the use is confined to a period when the landowner is least likely to be using or even present on his land. A bicycle trail across private land is much different and likely would not be viewed favorably by some of the landowners that support us now. It is unlikely that a path along the railroad corridor would be very popular for skiing, at least it would not be a major ski corridor.
- Shirley Seney, Supervisor of the Town of North Elba, offered that the Town could likely support the path although with the short notice for this meeting that had not had time to review the draft feasibility study. Snowmobiling in the corridor between Saranac Lake and Lake Placid is something that the Town of North Elba would like to see, so it might be advantageous for the recreational path advocates to work together with the snowmobile trail advocates.
- Howard Riley, Village Manager for the Village of Saranac Lake stated that the Village has promoted bicycling for a number of years with the Yellow Bike program offering the free use of a bicycle around town. They also have the River Walk underway which is creating off-road paths through the Village along the Saranac River.
- Debbie McDonnell, Director of the Community Development Office for the Village of Saranac Lake related that the Village is working with the NYSDOT to incorporate a bicycle path into the reconstruction of Route 86 along Lake Flower and on out past Ames to where the tracks cross the highway. That could tie into the recreational path as a nice loop or alternative route providing bicycle and pedestrian access to shopping, restaurants, motels, etc. along Lake Flower. They are very positive on the recreational path and can easily see its completion if everyone works together.
- The Lake Placid Visitors’ Bureau, represented by their Director, Jim McKenna is supportive of recreational path such as this and recognizes that many resort areas now offer this type of family oriented bicycle opportunity.

- Bicycle shop owners representing Placid Planet Bicycle Shop and High Peaks Cyclery hear this question all the time, “where is the bicycle path?” and would like to be able to provide an answer. A paved path will be preferred by a number of users, especially skiers who like to train on roller skis during the summer and wheel chair athletes. Maintenance issues are obviously not a top priority right now, however, the best trails have a maintenance program and usually have a “Friends of the Trail” Association to coordinate trail maintenance activities. Partnerships for building the trail with snowmobile and disabled athlete associations could broaden and enhance funding opportunities.
- The North Elba Historical Society manages the train station in Lake Placid and Laura Viscome requested that they need to be kept informed of plans for the bicycle path. They do not have staffing to provide a concession or support to bicyclists and others who might expect to use the station.
- Tracy Lamb, representing the U.S. Olympic Training Facility, stressed that it has become more and more difficult to find alternative training areas away from busy roads. Athletes like to run two or three abreast and that is difficult to do safely in our area. A recreational path could provide the alternative that the athletes need and could help support the training of disabled athletes who are increasingly using Lake Placid to train and hold events.
- Chris Conway offered the support of the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) and pointed out that ORDA receives over 100,000 visitors a year in the summer months and the question “where is the bike path?” is one they hear very often.
- Historic Saranac Lake has been fortunate in being able to refurbish the Union Depot in Saranac Lake, according to their director, Mary Hotaling. A recreational path would be one more activity that could help to make the depot a more vibrant facility in the community.

8.2 Proposed Next Steps

The Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA) has been a leader in developing recreation and transportation alternatives in the Adirondack Region since the 1950s. In the early 1990s, ANCA recognized that the Adirondack North Country region would benefit from a regional bicycle/pedestrian planning effort. In 1993 ANCA received ISTEAF funding and developed a Bicycle Master Plan for the North Country which addressed the needs of both local residents and tourists; placing a special emphasis on linking bicycle tourism to the significant tourism infrastructure already in place throughout the region, most notably the Adirondack North Country Scenic Byway system. With additional ISTEAF funding ANCA developed BIKEWAYS—the first regional bicycle map. In the mid-nineties, ANCA was an active participant in the successful application for the Depot restoration project in Saranac Lake with the goal of establishing a transportation hub for bicycles and pedestrians from the restored train station. In 1999, ANCA worked with five North Country communities to submit a successful TEA-21 application, referred to as TOBIE, which will establish a bicycle path and network linking five communities and extending from the Thendara train station through Old Forge to the community of Inlet on a network of on-road and off-road paths. Recently, ANCA hired a Scenic Byways Coordinator to address regional byway planning and promotion opportunities and continues to work closely with NYSDOT in their planning for rail operations along the Adirondack Corridor as well as being an active supporter of the Adirondack Railway Preservation Society in their operation of rail service on the Adirondack Corridor.

Most participants in the June 7 public meeting on the recreational path seemed to agree that ANCA was the most logical organization for coordinating some next steps for moving the Lake Placid – Saranac Lake Recreational Path from concept to construction. At the conclusion of the meeting, ANCA’s President, Jon MacAbee and Executive Director, Terry Martino proposed the following next steps that ANCA would pursue:

1. Organize and Convene an Advisory Committee: Work with participants who expressed an interest in being involved in this effort to coordinate follow-up activities. Expand the cooperative effort to include snowmobile organizations and disable athlete associations.
2. Apply for Funding to Continue Advocacy Work: Prepare a grant application to Bikes Belong to allow Holmes & Associates continue participating in planning and promoting the recreational path project.
3. Assist Local Governments in the Grant Application Process: Apply a portion of the Bikes Belong funding to working with North Elba and the Villages of Saranac Lake and Lake Placid on preparing TEA-21 grant applications and other applications for funding the recreational path.
4. Generate Legislative Support: ANCA will work to generate the key legislative support that will be necessary for turn the concept of a Saranac Lake / Lake Placid recreational path into a reality.
5. Explore Funding Opportunities: ANCA staff will search for alternative sources of funding for the path and bring promising opportunities to the attention of local government officials.

Key Partners in these next steps include:

Town of North Elba	US Olympic Training Facility	Essex County Historic Society
Village of Lake Placid	Adirondack Park Agency	Bicycle Shops, other businesses
Village of Saranac Lake	Olympic Regional	Local Civic Groups (Kiwanis,
Town of Harrietstown	Development Authority	Moose, Elks, Rotary, Lions,
Franklin & Essex Counties	NYS DOT	Knights, etc.)
Adirondack Railroad	NYS DEC	Adirondack Park Mountain
	Historic Saranac Lake	Biking Initiative
		Adirondack Sports Commission

9 Selected Recreational Path Studies and References

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Summit County Community Development Department

1989 Summit County, Colorado 1989 Recreation Trail Surveys. Breckenridge: Summit County Community Development Department [phone: (303) 453-2561].

Map 1: Saranac Lake-Lake Placid Rail Trail showing APA Land Classifications, Wetlands and Alternate Routes

