

I am delighted that the pressure brought by over 12,000 citizens, nearly all of the municipalities along the rail corridor, and organizations such as ours have moved this issue to where the general public can have a say. Our goal was to let democracy work, not power politics or special interests. Unfortunately, it took a lot of people two years to get to where the State is doing what it committed to do 18 years ago.

My personal view is that the data are overwhelmingly in favor of a recreation trail on this long-abandoned rail line. There seems to be no evidence that freight or passenger service will ever come back, so the competition is between two forms of recreational tourism. The one that I, and I think thousands of others, prefer is biking, hiking, walking, etc. in the warm months and skiing, snowmobiling, cross-country snowshoeing, etc. in the winter months. The data compiled by multiple studies says that to use this corridor for recreation would cost almost nothing, but to recreate an antiquated and unwanted rail service would cost close to \$50 million and attract just one 30th of the visitors a recreation trail would. From a personal standpoint, I will look forward to a flat, safe, easy way to bike with my grandkids who can peddle their way to great picnics, swims, and museum visits without worrying about highway hazards.

I understand the other side's view: railroads are cool, nostalgic, and once were essential. I love the history and hope that we can capture it in the depots and way-stations on a recreation trail. However, there is no data brought forward thus far to support the theory that spending over \$50 million to restore rail service that no one (so far) has asked for will return anything to the North Country's beleaguered taxpayers. In actuality, should we restore regular rail service to handle the supposed 7,000 annual passengers who might use it (20 per day on average) we would wipe out over \$23 million of existing revenues in the winter, our direst season for business, by eliminating snowmobiling on the corridor.

Thankfully, both sides will get their say in the management plan review. The pro-trail people are ready, and I think right.