



December 13, 2019

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Hon. Andrew Cuomo
Governor
Executive Chamber
State Capital
Albany, NY 12224

RE: Now is the time to build the 55-mile-long Hudson River Bike Trail from North Creek to Saratoga Springs

Dear Governor Cuomo:

As you plan your 2020-21 New York State budget, one important item to include is \$500,000 in funding for Warren County for a feasibility study for conversion of the failed tourist train rail line from North Creek in Warren County to Saratoga Springs in Saratoga County into a new Hudson River Bike Trail. This 55-mile-long Saratoga to North Creek Railway could be a wonderful new amenity for the region, which would enhance the quality of life of the area and would be an important amenity that draws visitors.

A groundswell of support is emerging for the transition of the dormant 55-mile-long Saratoga and North Creek Railway to the new Hudson River Bike Trail (see map attached). A new public trail from Saratoga Springs to North Creek would connect dozens of small communities such as Corinth, Lake Luzerne, Hadley, Stony Creek, Thurman, Athol, The Glen, Warrensburg, and Riparius, among other hamlets and businesses along the rail line. Such a trail would be very popular and heavily used. As we've seen with the Warren County Bike Trail between Lake George and Glens Falls, businesses would gravitate to the trail.

Protect the Adirondacks

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The Saratoga to North Creek Railway is owned by Warren County and the Town of Corinth. The rail line has been leased since 2010, but the private leaseholder is in bankruptcy and no new railroad operator is interested in leasing the railway. Now is the time to begin to explore other options for this rail corridor.

What makes this trail especially appealing is that more than 30 miles of this trail would run along the Hudson River, where each bend in the river provides a different great view. Running along the banks of the Hudson River, this trail would delight as one of the loveliest public trail systems in New York.

From bases in Saratoga Springs or North Creek, bicyclists, runners and walkers, among other users, would enjoy a stunning trip with long unbroken sections at the north end. In the summer there are more than a dozen places to swim. In winter months, the trail would be available for cross-country skiing, snowmobiling and fat bike riding on snow.

Rural America is inextricably connected to the global economy, though powerless over it. Rural America is littered with discarded industrial facilities. Decisions on papermills, mines, grocery stores and pharmacies are not made locally, but are made from afar.

Across the U.S., rural areas have fewer jobs today than they did in 2009, before the Great Recession, while urban-metropolitan areas not only gained back all jobs lost in the Great Recession, but have added over 11 million new ones. Population growth in the U.S. is heavily skewed towards metropolitan areas. Upstate New York counties are facing many of these same realities.

Americans today are less likely to move than ever before. Employment is no longer the driving force that sees millions of people move great distances. When people do move quality of life is the driving force. Rural areas that are bucking national trends of stagnation and decline are those that have invested in, built, and facilitated a broad range of social amenities, including restaurants, art centers, coffee shops, parks, and non-profits. Scenic beauty is a vital amenity. Ample public outdoor recreation is another.

The future for Adirondack communities lies in building social amenities that are connected to our abundant and accessible natural resources. There is no new technology or app that will render our forests, lakes, and mountains obsolete. The Forest Preserve cannot be picked up and moved to China. The Forest Preserve can't

be closed and shuttered. The public amenities throughout our communities and public lands are the economic cornerstones for our region.

Protect the Adirondacks is working with local government leaders, businesses, and volunteers to build support for a feasibility study of the conversion of the 55-mile-long Saratoga and North Creek Railway. We believe that a vigorous public assessment process based on extensive public input should be organized to explore this worthy proposal. We also need to look at the future of the 29-mile Sanford Lake Railway from North Creek to the Tahawus Mine.

Construction is likely to start on the conversion of the railroad from Lake Placid to Saranac Lake to a public multi-use recreation trail next summer. There will be a lot to learn from that experience. Now is the time for Warren County leaders be pro-active and start examining the possibilities of conversion of its rail corridor. The Hudson River Bike Trail is an idea whose time has come. Protect the Adirondacks urges you to add funding in your 2020-21 budget for Warren County for a feasibility study to study conversion of the Saratoga and North Creek Railway.

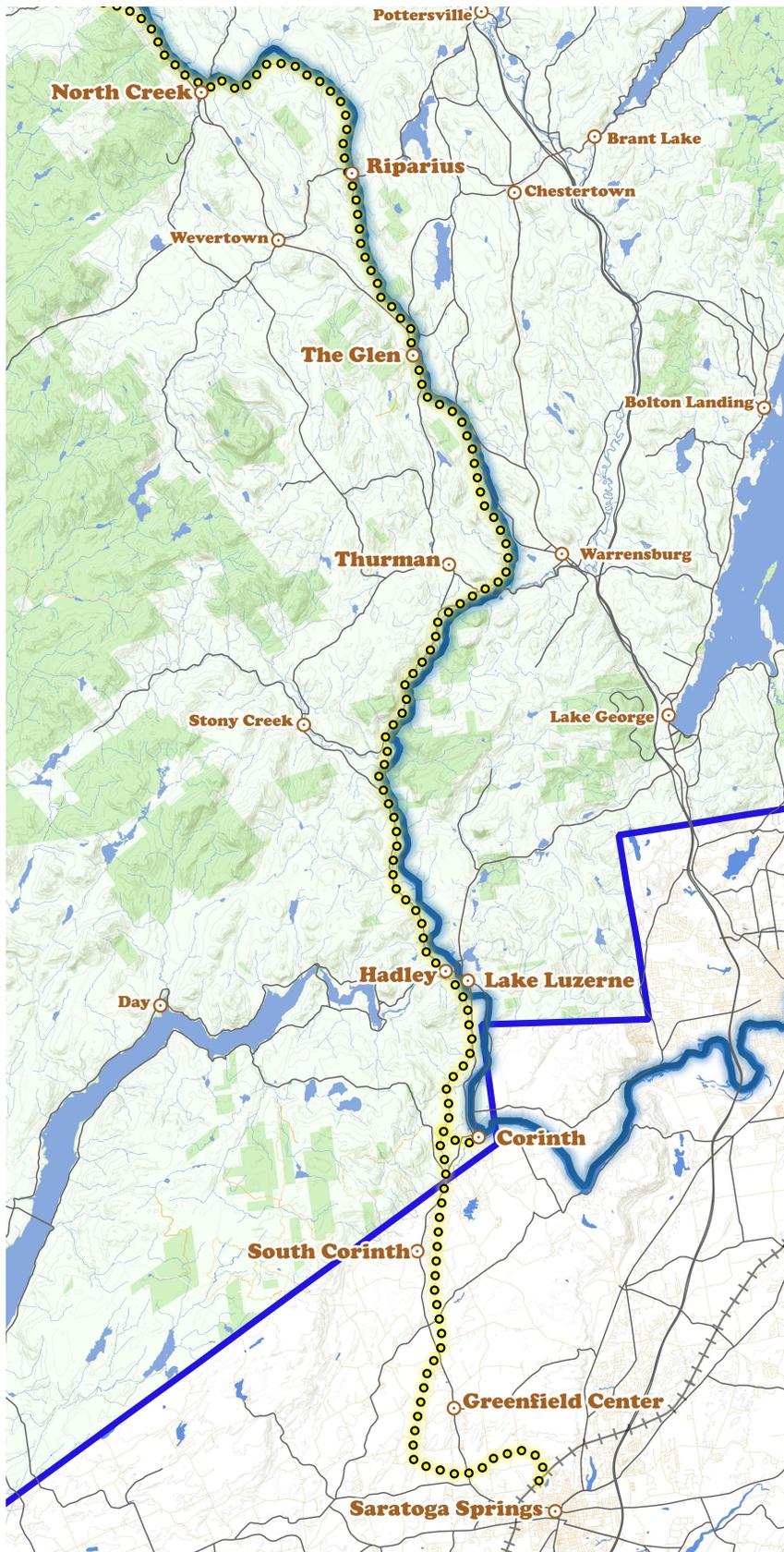
On behalf of the Board of Directors of Protect the Adirondacks, please accept my gratitude for the opportunity to present our concerns on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Bauer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peter" being more prominent than the last name "Bauer".

Peter Bauer,
Executive Director

CC D. Bryk, Executive Chamber
A. Lefton, Executive Chamber
M. Phillips, Executive Chamber
E. Preminger, Executive Chamber
B. Seggos, NYSDEC
S. Mahar, NYSDEC
J. Drabicki, NYSDEC



Map of the Saratoga to North Creek Railway