

NYSDOT'S PLAN FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION IN THE ADIRONDACK PARK

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ABSTRACT

The Adirondack Park is the largest state park and state level protected area in the contiguous United States comprising over 6 million acres of private and state lands. The Park includes approximately 1,100 miles of state highways, and access to thousands of recreational resources. It is no overstatement to say that a safe, efficient and environmentally sound transportation network in the Adirondack Park is the lifeblood of the Park's economy. That economy is based to a very large degree on tourism around the natural resources of the region. Although year round residents of the Park number slightly over 130,000, each year an estimated 3.5 million travelers visit the Adirondacks. To underscore the potential strength of this tourist based economy, it has been determined that 83.8 million people reside within a one-day drive of the Adirondack Park. Transportation has played a large role in the Adirondacks bold and colorful history. Trails, waterways, rail and roads have helped shape the park, and will continue to do so long into the future. This relationship has long been recognized by stakeholders and NYSDOT. The 1970 Report of the Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks recommended emphasis of the scenic qualities of all in-Park roadways, while the 1972 Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan developed guidelines for travel corridors and noted that most visitors primary experience of the Park is from the travel corridors, and the Adirondack Highway Council (1974-1985) set forth common visions for transportation systems that strengthened the Park's natural character. In this tradition NYSDOT is moving forward a new planning effort looking at the needs of a functional transportation system in the Park while meeting related social, economic and environmental needs to achieve a sustainable transportation system in the Park. The effort is called Travel Corridor Unit Management Planning and the NYSDOT is collaborating with other agencies, local government and stakeholders to develop plans for all corridors in the Park with a focus on sustainability. The long term outcomes will result in maintaining and improving the functional needs of the transportation system while integrating functional needs of society that relate to the economy, social needs, and environment. This means that transportation functional needs like cost, life cycle, durability, safety, will also look to strengthen social needs like tourism, water quality, habitat integrity/connectivity in a more defined and understood relationship to the transportation system. There are many challenges facing a long term comprehensive planning process, but it is addressing issues like clearly defining the issues/needs, defining the transportation relationships, continuity of information, arrival of new issues, training, asset management of resources/needs along travel corridors (e.g. fish barriers, visual resource areas, invasive species), and finding solutions with limited resources. The presentation will give an overview of the key factors of a sustainable transportation system in the Park, desired states and recommendations for some key elements like habitat integrity/connectivity, current outcomes, and how this can be a model for other parts of the country.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ed Frantz has worked for New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) for the last 18 years. At NYSDOT he has served as a Regional Environmental Manager and currently is the Adirondack Park and Forest Preserve Manager covering the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. Prior to NYSDOT Mr. Frantz worked for 6 years at the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation as a Wetlands Specialist. Ed is a Graduate of the State University of New York (SUNY) College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse, and SUNY Morrisville. He currently serves on the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Committee on Ecology and Transportation, the Board for the NYS Wetlands Forum, the Board and former Chairman of the NYS Flora Association, a former Board member for the NYS Invasive Plant Council and is a founding member of the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program.