



Catskill Mountain Railroad Company, Inc.
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November 7, 2017

Vincent Sapienza
Commissioner, NYCDEP
59-17 Junction Boulevard
Flushing, NY 11373

RE: Ashokan Reservoir Railroad Easement

Dear Commissioner Sapienza,

I am writing you directly concerning the 11.5 mile railroad easement that Ulster County owns through the Ashokan Reservoir and its impending conversion to a trail.

The Catskill Mountain Railroad is the permit holder with Ulster County for rail operations from Kingston up towards the reservoir area, and has requested that the County leave 1.1 miles of track in place from the eastern boundary of the easement at Basin Road up to the middle of the Glenford Dike for future operations of the railroad.

The Catskill Mountain Railroad desires to disembark riders from Kingston at the new trailhead in West Hurley which is only 2000 feet west of the Easement boundary. Additionally the CMRR would like to take passengers to the Glenford Dike, a short distance further, for scenic, dinner and lunch trains.

Several years ago our Chief Engineer, Joseph Michaels, P.E., received a letter from Paul Rush dated April 30, 2013 that stated that rail alongside trail in the easement area would not work "because many sections of the railroad corridor along the reservoir are too narrow, and the topography too severe, to accommodate both uses side by side".

The CMRR then looked to find a stretch of the corridor that was wide enough to accommodate rail alongside trail, but allowed access by the railroad to the scenic views of the reservoir. We concluded that the 1.1 mile stretch from Basin Road to the Glenford Dike was the most likely area that the NYCDEP would accept a short stretch of rail alongside trail. The CMRR created a business plan based on this concept in 2015:

http://catskillmtrailroad.com/cmrr_business_plan_kingston.pdf

Since then the County has entered a Deed of Trail Easement which allows the County to leave as much railroad infrastructure in place as it desires (Page 7, Paragraph 15).

We have recently been surprised to see that the County is moving forward on removing all the Railroad infrastructure in the reservoir easement area, including the 1.1 miles we requested be reserved for future use by the train coming up from Kingston.

When we pressed several County officials on this matter, those officials stated that there was no physical constriction for rail alongside trail in this 1.1 mile segment, and that the existing creosote ties could be replaced with non-creosoted ties.

They went on to say that the NYCDEP was the sole obstacle to keeping these tracks in the reservoir easement, and that the NYCDEP will allow absolutely no railroad activity in the easement area, even for trains to reach the trailheads on each end of the reservoir to discharge passengers at the new trailheads or see the views from the train at the Glenford Dike.

Could you confirm with us that it is the NYCDEP's policy not to allow even a limited amount of railroad activity at each end of the reservoir easement? If so, could you let us know the reasons why and whether there is any form of mitigation that could be used to offset those reasons?

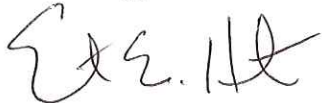
As stated above, we believe allowing the citizens of Ulster County to ride the train from Kingston to the Ashokan Reservoir (and transfer to the trail) to be a great benefit to those citizens and other visitors to the County.

The issue is being debated widely in Ulster County at this time, and an official answer from the NYCDEP on this subject would be very helpful for all parties to work out a long term plan for both rail and trail on each end of the Ashokan easement area.

Like you I am an engineer by training and believe that there is no problem that can't be solved if both sides want to solve it.

I look forward to hearing from you in the very near future. I can be reached at (347) 229-6977 and by email at planning@catskillmtrailroad.com.

Sincerely,



Ernest E. Hunt
President
Catskill Mountain Railroad