



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

Request For Information (RFI)



Options for Long-term Use of the
Saranac Lake Depot on the
Adirondack Rail Trail

Franklin County, New York

Image source: NYS Cultural Resource Information System, "Saranac Lake Passenger Station"

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I. Introduction

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) invites the public to submit ideas and plans for use and public access to the historic Saranac Lake Depot building on the Adirondack Rail Trail in the Village of Saranac Lake, Franklin County, New York.

The Adirondack Rail Trail is a new multi-use trail designed, built, and managed by DEC that connects the villages of Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake. This new, year-round trail is designed for use by cyclists, walkers, and runners, and for snowmobilers, skiers, and snowshoers in the winter. DEC also owns and manages the Saranac Lake Depot: a historic train station which served the Village of Saranac Lake during the era of rail travel which will now be a principal access point for the new rail trail.

The Depot is near the center of Saranac Lake, sits mere feet from the Adirondack Rail Trail, and has significant potential for a unique partnership that will enhance both the trail and local community. It was built in 1904 and operated as a passenger station until 1965. New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) oversaw a multi-million-dollar renovation of the Depot in 1997 after which it was used intermittently for excursion rail trips until 2015.

DEC envisions that a public or private partner will work with DEC to maintain and operate the Depot under a long-term agreement. The partner will help DEC provide public services for trail users and ensure the historic preservation and interpretation of the Depot building. The information obtained by this RFI will give the DEC a better understanding of the interest in the long-term use of this facility. Any information submitted at this information stage will become the property of the DEC. It is expected but not required that, after reviewing the responses to this RFI, DEC may develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit specific plans and select a partner in this effort. All participants in this RFI will be notified if there is an RFP and will be able to submit proposals in the formal procurement.

To provide input to DEC, please review the guiding principles described [below](#) and the directions for submissions. DEC is accepting written responses to this RFI through November 3, 2023.

II. Site Context and Description



Figure 1: The Saranac Lake Depot c. 1909. Source: Library of Congress call # LC-D4-71219 [P&P].

A. Site History

The Depot is in the heart of the Adirondacks in the Village of Saranac Lake, Franklin County. Built in 1904 by the Delaware and Hudson Railroad, the Union Depot Station became the largest station on the New York Central Railroad, Adirondack Division line north of Utica. At its prime, the station handled up to 20 trains per day. The Depot was renovated in 1979-80 for use by the Adirondack Railway during the Olympic Games, and again in 1997 for use by the Adirondack Scenic Railroad. The last excursion trains stopped at the Depot in 2015.

B. Site Description

The Depot is located on the new Adirondack Rail Trail, a 34-mile multi-use trail connecting the villages of Tupper Lake, Saranac Lake, and Lake Placid. The first phase of the trail connecting Saranac Lake and Lake Placid is scheduled to open for year-round public use in Fall 2023. Subsequent phases will open in 2024 and 2025. **Appendix A** is the Unit Management Plan describing DEC's objectives and plans for development of the Adirondack Rail Trail.

The rail trail is designed for walking, running, cycling, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. The trail will be open to the public all day, year-round, without fee. The rail trail will be paved within the Village of Saranac Lake, including where it runs beside the Depot.

The Site will be one of the primary trailheads for rail trail users. The State will develop dedicated parking at and around the Site on state-owned lands for public use.

Request for Information
Saranac Lake Union Depot

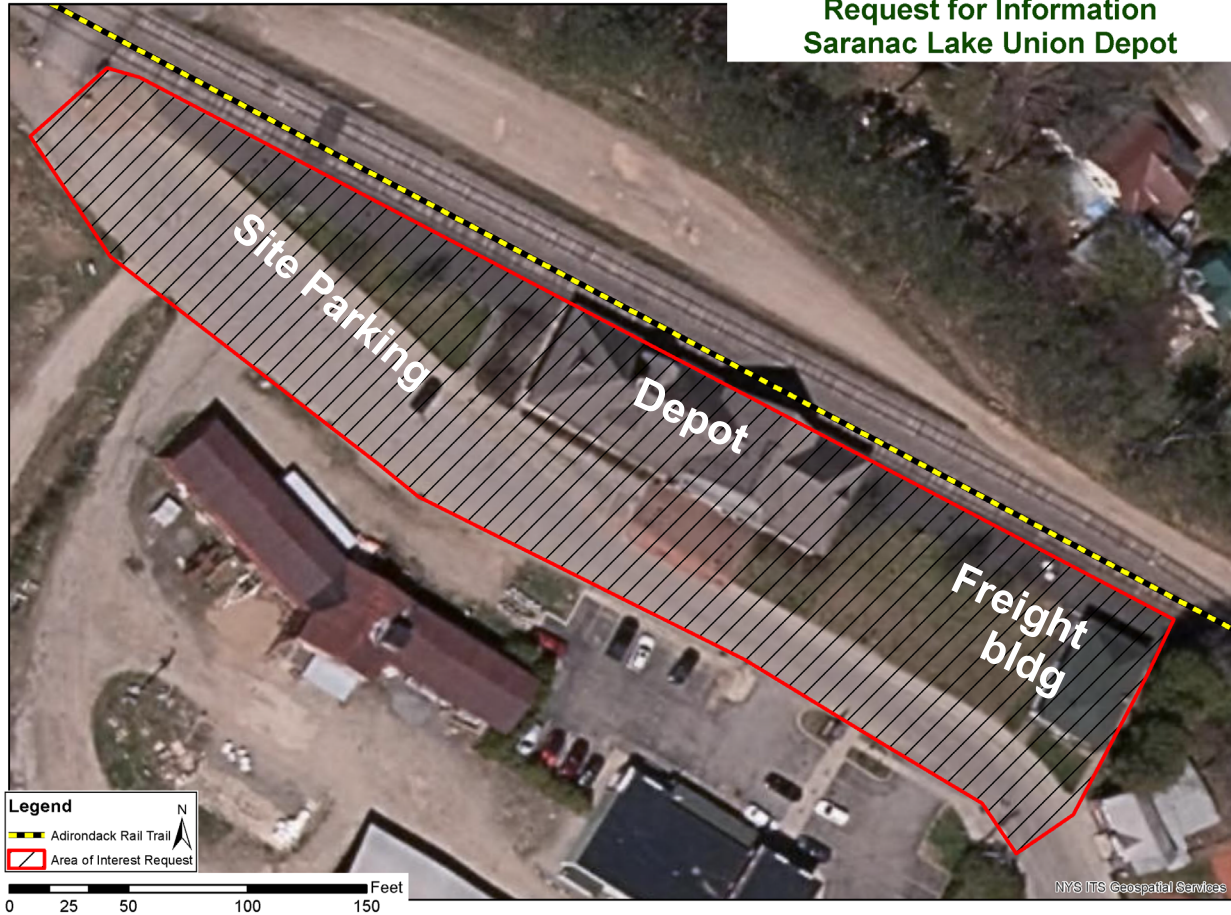


Figure 2: The hatched area above depicts the proposed site, including the Depot, the Freight Building, lawn and public spaces, and parking.

Depot building: The building is a one-story, 3,900 square-foot wood-framed structure with stone foundations, prominent hipped and gabled roof and dormers. Its exterior is wood shingles with prominent architectural wood trims and detailing, heavy masonry piers at the entry porch and some decorative architectural ironwork at the deep overhangs. Generally, the Depot building is in fair condition with all of its current historic features and detailing intact, but is in need of updating, renovations and repairs.

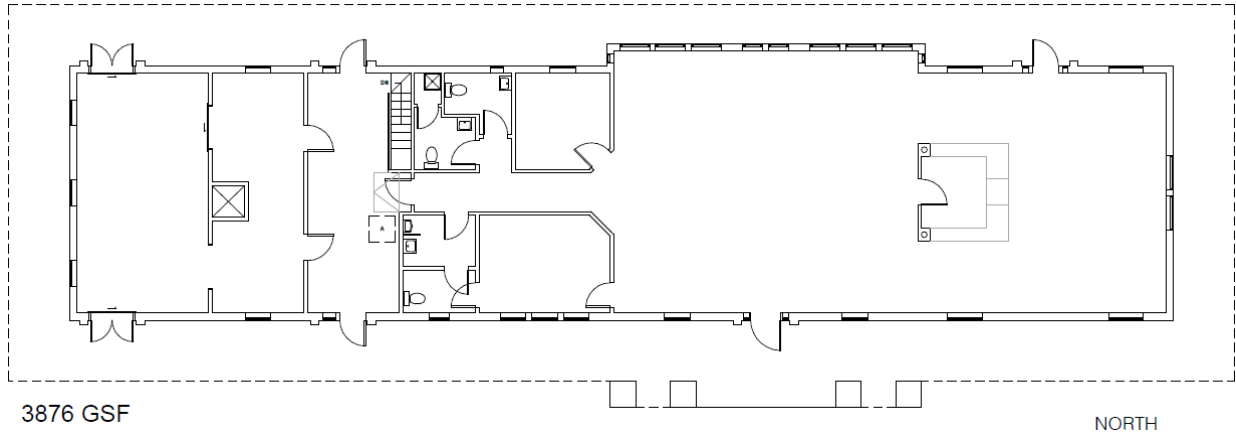
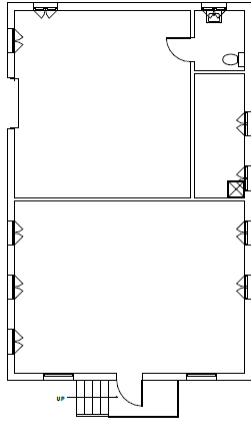


Figure 3: Plan of Depot building ground floor.



Figure 4: Current condition of Depot building (north and south sides).

Freight building: The 1,200 square-foot Freight Building is an ancillary structure to the Union Depot and is presumed to have been constructed in about the same time frame as the Depot. It is wood framed with stone foundations, rough stucco exterior and hipped roof. Generally, the Freight building is in fair to poor condition with most of its historic features and detailing intact.



1252 GSF

Figure 5: Freight Building first floor plan.



Figure 6: Current condition of Freight building (south and west sides).

Grounds: The site for the two buildings is narrow, generally flat, and stretches parallel to the rail trail. The site is well graded with some lawn planting beds, ornamental trees and shrubbery. Generally, the site hardscape is in fair condition with some deteriorated brick pavers at the front entry plaza.

Please refer to **Appendix B** for additional details about the condition of the Site.

C. Existing Conditions

DEC commissioned an existing conditions survey, code compliance survey and a cost budget for recommended improvements at the Site in 2022. Please refer to the full findings shown in the report included as **Appendix B**.

D. Transportation

There is year-round vehicle access to the Site via Depot Street from State Route 86. The Village street ends short of the Site, so interested parties should describe in their submissions how they will provide snow clearing and removal

from the end of the public road, for the parking area, and for walkways around the Site.

There are 40 parking spaces available at the Site. Parking capacity at the Site will need to accommodate users of the Depot and users of the rail trail.

E. Utilities

The Site is served by Village of Saranac Lake water and sewer utility services, and by National Grid electrical service. There is an on-site above-ground heating oil tank served by a local vendor. Telephone and high-speed cable internet service is available.

F. Historic Preservation

Preservation and interpretation of the Site as a historic resource is a key requirement. The Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor is encompassed by the New York Central Railroad, Adirondack Division Historic District, listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The National Register nomination describes the Historic District as within the existing railroad right-of-way and associated buildings, including the Depot and the Freight building.

The district was listed in the New York State and National Register of Historic Places in 1993 where it was found to be primarily significant “for its role in shaping the social and economic history of the Adirondack-Northern New York region between 1891 and the Second World War.” It was determined to derive additional significance “as a distinctive collection of railway, buildings, structures, and infrastructure reflecting engineering design and practices during a transitional period when wood, stone, and iron were replaced by concrete and steel.”

The Unit Management Plan requires that the historic fabric of both buildings be maintained such as key architectural elements, materials, and fixtures. There should be no material physical alteration of the buildings’ exteriors. Alterations to the interior or exterior of either building is subject to review and approval by DEC staff, including the Agency Preservation Officer.

G. Zoning and Land Use

The Site is in the Adirondack Park in the Village of Saranac Lake. Uses of the site may be governed by the following state and zoning and land use plans and codes.

The Site is classified as part of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor, a designation shown in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. Permissible uses of travel corridors are described at pages 50-56 of the 2019 edition of the State Land Master Plan, available at https://apa.ny.gov/documents/Laws_Regs/APSLMP.pdf.

The Site is in the Village’s zoning district E-1. The Village Zoning Code permits a range of institutional and commercial uses within this district, subject to site plan

review. For details, please consult the Village of Saranac Lake Development Code, Part 2: Zoning, available online at <https://ecode360.com/31626300>.

III. DEC's Management Objectives for the Depot

The Unit Management Plan explains that the Site is intended to serve as a major gateway for public access to the Adirondack Rail Trail. Use of the Site must provide continuous public access and basic services for trail users on a year-round basis.

DEC is seeking information regarding the following to address DEC's objectives for the Site:

1. **Preservation of the historic structures:** Both buildings at the site require exterior and interior renovation to be put to productive use. Renovation must comply with the historic preservation principles outlined above. Interested parties should indicate how they would restore and maintain the Depot (and the Freight building, if part of their proposal), and what funding sources or financing mechanisms may be available.
2. **Creating a public outdoor space:** Describe planned exterior improvements and landscaping to create an inviting public space. Proposals should discuss how year-round landscape maintenance (e.g., mowing and upkeep of plantings) and timely snow clearing, and removal will be provided, including the access road from the end of the Village street.
3. **Historic interpretation:** The Unit Management Plan explains that the principal rail stations, including the Depot, will be "places for historic interpretation" where the public will come to learn about the history of rail in the Adirondack Park and its significance to the development of the region.
4. **Providing services that support and complement the Adirondack Rail Trail:** DEC will require year-round access to the grounds and to the principal interior spaces of the Depot, including year-round operation of public restrooms. Commercial or institutional uses should complement and support the Adirondack Rail Trail, for instance, by providing goods or services for rail trail users or by providing educational or historical interpretive services that relate to the rail corridor and the Adirondack Park.

IV. How and When to Submit Your Ideas or Plans to DEC

To help DEC review the information, DEC recommends submissions include the following information:

1. **Contact information:** Include your name, address, a telephone number, and an email address. If you are submitting an idea or plan on behalf of an entity

or organization, provide a brief summary of the entity such as its mission or purpose and principal functions.

2. **Narrative:** Please describe your proposed use for the Depot, freight building, and surrounding site. The narrative should address how the idea or plan supports the four management objectives described in Section III, above. DEC will also benefit from a discussion of potential timeframes to accomplish your idea or plan, and a discussion of anticipated costs and potential funding avenues, including whether you anticipate the funds would be raised from public or private sources.
3. **Concept sketch, site plan, and/or simple rendering:** DEC welcomes informal diagrams, sketches, renderings, or plans if you believe this would help convey your idea for the Site.
4. **Estimate of economic and community benefits:** DEC welcomes any analysis of the potential additional benefits to the surrounding community, including economic benefits, if your idea or plan was implemented.

DEC welcomes questions about the Depot and the RFI process, as well as requests for a site tour to better inform submissions, through October 16, 2023. All questions will be answered in a publicly available online document that will be posted on the NYSDEC website at <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/124911.html> no later than one week prior to the close of the submission acceptance period.

Submissions must be emailed or postmarked by November 3, 2023.

RFI submissions, questions, and tour requests should be sent to Comment.DepotRFI@dec.ny.gov. Submissions can also be sent by hard copy or flash drive to the following address:

NYSDEC
Attn: Meaghan Yost, Program Aide
Re: Saranac Lake Union Depot RFI
1115 State Route 86, PO Box 296
Ray Brook, NY 12977-0296

V. Disclaimers

Interested parties should assume that the Site, including land, improvements, and any supporting building infrastructure, are provided “as is” and “where is” without representation, warranty, or guaranty as to quantity, quality, character, condition, size, or kind, or that the same is in condition or fit to be used for a specific purpose. DEC makes no representation or warranty concerning the

accuracy or utility of information provided here or otherwise provided in support of this RFI.

The issuance of this RFI and the submission of an idea or plan by any person does not obligate DEC in any manner whatsoever. DEC reserves the right to amend, modify, or withdraw this RFI and to communicate with any interested party to clarify responses or submissions. Any information received by DEC may be used in preparing an RFP.

All information submitted in response to this RFI may be subject to the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL), which generally mandates the disclosure of documents in the possession of DEC upon the request of any person unless the content of the document falls under a specific exemption to disclosure.

VI. Appendices

Appendix A: 2020 Amendment to the Remsen-Lake Placid Unit Management Plan

Appendix B: 2022 Existing Conditions Study of Saranac Lake Depot

