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June 24, 2008

Governor David A. Paterson
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

RE: S.2324-B/A.9317-B – An Act to create a task force on multi-use trails

Dear Governor Paterson:

Parks & Trails New York respectfully urges you to sign the above referenced bill.

Bill Summary: This bill, known as the Multi-use Trails Network Initiative, would establish a broad-based, multi-agency effort to plan for the creation, maintenance and promotion of a statewide, comprehensive network of multi-use trails that will help ensure that New Yorkers are only minutes from a trail or park. The plan would be developed by a 16-member task force consisting of representatives of the many state agencies and other groups whose missions support trail promotion and development. The six-part plan will be based on a vision for a comprehensive statewide system of primary multi-use trail corridors linked to and enhanced by regional and local multi-use trails. The plan will also include an inventory of existing, planned and potential multi-use trail corridors and recommendations for and trail promotion, funding, signage, and maintenance and corridor acquisition and development.

Explanation: New York has all the elements to become a pre-eminent trail state, attracting residents as well as visitors from across the nation and abroad to experience the historic communities and varied and beautiful landscapes accessible through a statewide trail network. We are fortunate to have more than 1,000 miles of multi-use trails such as rail trails, canal trails, river walks, trails within greenways and other locally developed trails that provide transportation, recreational, health, economic, conservation, and quality of life benefits. With the ever-increasing emphasis on the need to be physically active to sustain and improve physical and mental health and the skyrocketing cost of gasoline, more and more people, especially seniors and families, are using and asking for more trails to be built within their communities.

In order to advance trail development to the level being demanded by our citizens and maximize the multiple economic, environmental, health, and quality of life benefits that trails generate, New York needs to develop a vision and a plan for a statewide multi-use trail network that will inform acquisition and development decisions and funding allocations for trail promotion, development, interpretation, and maintenance.

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Parks & Trails New York

Creation of that plan needs to be a broad-based effort. Signing the Multi-use Trails Network Initiative bill ensures that the vision and plan for New York's multi-use trail network will be developed by a task force consisting of representatives of the many state agencies and other groups whose missions support trail promotion and development. In creating the plan, input will also be sought from local governments; regional planning authorities; regional tourism agencies; regional advisory groups representing the interests of local conservationists, outdoor and sports enthusiast groups; and federal agencies involved with greenways and heritage corridors.

As the agency most directly involved with trails planning, the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation will direct the task force. But, because trails are vitally important not only for recreation but also for tourism, health, alternative transportation, and community revitalization, we believe that the agencies representing these other interests must be full partners at the table in order realize the fullest potential of any planning effort.

For the foregoing reasons, Parks & Trails New York supports this legislation. We urge you to sign S.2324-B/A.9317-B.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Robin Dropkin".

Robin Dropkin
Executive Director