

WNBZ  
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## Adirondack Council Pushing for Fewer, Taller Cell Towers

The Adirondack Council is lobbying the Adirondack Park Agency to require more widespread co-location of cell carrier arrays on projects inside the Blue Line.

In a letter to APA Environmental Program Specialist George “Skip” Outcalt, council Legislative Director Scott Lorey compelled the agency to require cell carriers to share towers instead of building separate towers on the same parcel.

“Companies should be encouraged or mandated to seek co-location when a nearby tower is available,” Lorey writes. “This can be accomplished by re-examining the ‘towers policy’ and fixing some of the obvious flaws that are apparent now that the policy has been practically applied for over seven years.”

According to APA spokesman Keith McKeever, since 2008 the APA has approved 15 new-build cell tower projects in the wake of the deaths of several snowbound motorists on Interstate-87.

In contrast, 25 co-locations have been permitted by the agency in the same time period.

The agency is currently considering a T-Mobile project in the town of Inlet that would allow a tower to be constructed a stone’s throw away from an already-constructed Verizon Tower.

The APA recently approved a cell project in North Hudson that will allow two towers on the same parcel near the Northway.

“One suggestion that the Council has made before, is to require that the applicant show its attempts to co-locate on existing structures within a reasonable distance of its site and explain in detail why no option other than a new tower is feasible,” Lorey said. “It appears that telecommunications companies, for the most part, are not sharing space on each others’ towers, as was expected.”

Last fall, regional executives from the four major cell phone carriers told agency commissioners that sharing space doesn’t make good business sense, as they are after all competing entities. They also argued that the use of varying cellular technologies requires differing tower citing.

The APA typically strives to keep the elevation of cell towers as low as possible to limit the impact on the park’s aesthetic character.

But for the council, taller towers are more desirable than several at the same location.

“Even a slightly taller tower will have less environmental impact than having to construct a second tower,” Lorey said. “Depending on locations, a second tower may require additional tree cutting, road building and utilities to be installed.”

APA staff and cell carrier executives have said that in order for co-location to be effective, towers would have to be significantly taller to accommodate multiple cellular arrays.

According to cell carrier officials, the average cost of construction of out-park towers is \$57,000, while in the park the cost nearly doubles to \$104,000.

-Jon Alexander, 12-19-09