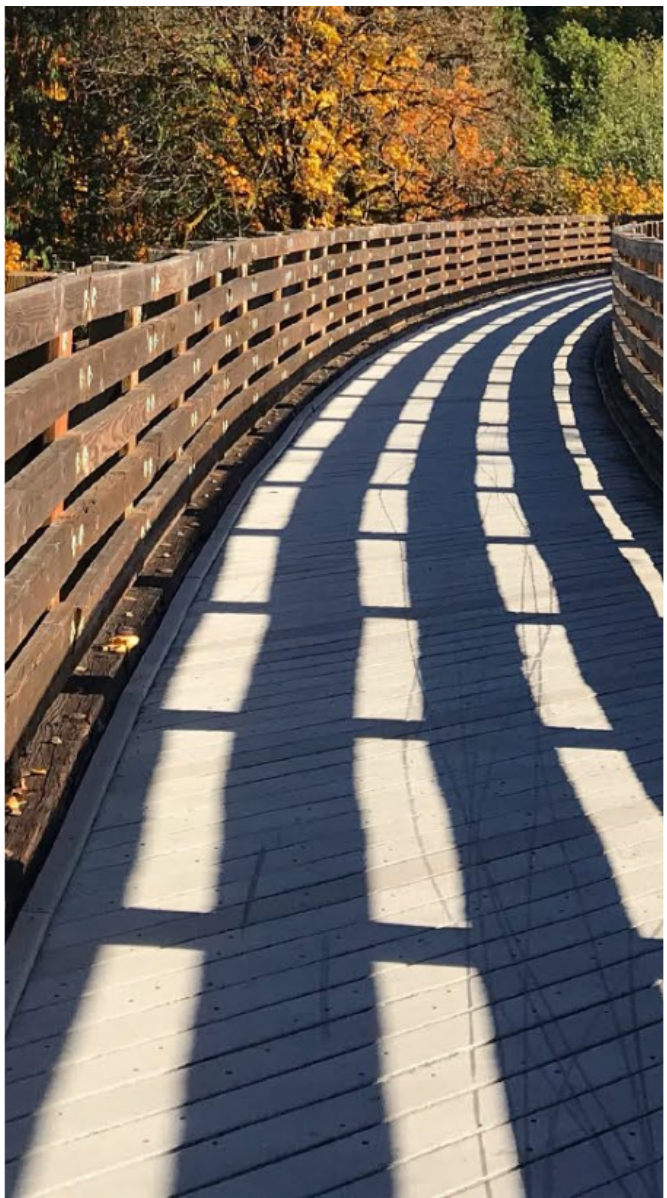
TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

2026

TrailLink Unlimited

Guides



Dryden Rail Trail

New York

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The Dryden Rail Trail is a developing trail that will someday connect with the East Ithaca Recreation Way, forming over 16 miles of continuous walking and biking in Tompkins County. But it's not just pedestrians and cyclists who benefit: horseback riders, cross-country skiiers, bird- and wildlife enthusiasts can enjoy the trail too.

The trail has a combination of stone dust surfacing, as well as dirt/ grass. Future plans include making the trail surface uniform (stone dust) and ADA compliant.

The west segment begins on State Route 13 and heads southwest into Varna, and then passes through the Reynolds Game Farm (owned by the NY Department of Environmental Conservation) to meet the East Ithaca Recreation Way near the Cornell campus.

Presently, two pieces of the trail are open. The east segment runs from a pond near Virgil Creek to the Village of Freeville and then heads southeast to West Main Street in Dryden, where it seamlessly continues east towards Harford along a section of trail know as the Jim Schug Trail.

Jim Schug Section (4.2 miles)

This section of trail is know as known as the Jim Schug Trail in memory of the late town supervisor who acquired the land. The trail follows a remarkably level Lehigh Valley Railroad corridor; the railroad constructed the bed by creating cuts and using the removed earth and rock to fill in low spots. The resulting trail is level, while the surrounding landscape dips and rises, leaving you on an elevated berm or passing through cuts where ground level is above your head.

There are numerous road crossings—many with small parking areas—that provide easy trail access. From the village of Dryden, the trail runs south and east; it also links with the Finger Lakes Trail, a footpath for hikers.

Benches mark your distance every 0.5 mile, and accompanying informational signs reveal historical and natural features along the trail.

When the trail crosses State Route 38, the landscape becomes more rural. Farm fields and silos, woods and wetlands lie ahead. Don't hurry through the next mile but rather sit and listen to the sounds of the wetlands. In the evening, especially in spring, the sounds of frogs surround you.

The area around Dryden Lake and along the trail is said to have some of the best birding in the Finger Lakes region. Dryden Lake Park surrounds the lake and has picnic tables, a pavilion and fishing access, including a handicapped-accessible platform. All seasons see activity on the lake: Birders flock to the area for waterfowl in the spring and fall. In the winter, the lake is a popular spot for ice fishing.

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States: New York
Counties: Cortland,Tompkins
Length: 10.4miles
Trail end points: Game Farm Rd. (East Ithaca Recreation Way) to East Lake Rd. (Harford)
Trail surfaces: Crushed Stone,Dirt,Grass,Gravel
Trail category: Rail-Trail
Trail activities: Bike,Fishing,Horseback Riding,Mountain Biking,Walking,Wheelchair Accessible,Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

Parking can be found at Monkey Run Natural Area in Varna, at the Freeville Pavillion (287 George Rd), near the Station Creamery in Dryden (62 W Main St), where the trail crosses Keith Ln. and at 307 Willow Crossing Rd.

See TrailLink Map for detailed parking directions and all options.

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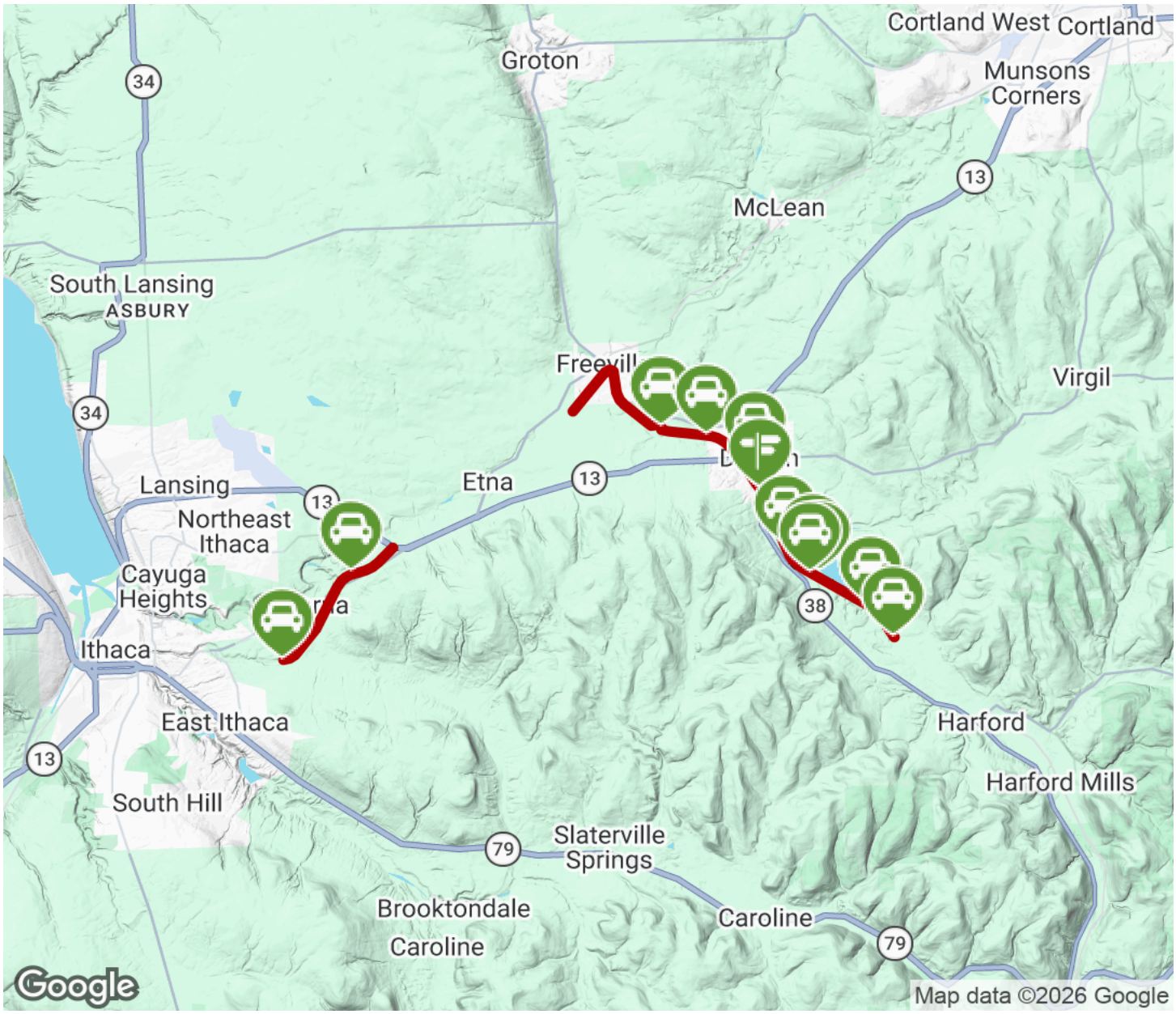

Trailhead Restroom Parking Water Fountain Tunnel

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