



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



Old Plank Road Trail (IL)

Illinois



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Running between the suburbs of Chicago Heights and Joliet, the Old Plank Road Trail runs for 21.6 miles and offers views of oak trees and sugar maples, prairie grasses, and wildflowers that peek up through the underbrush.

About the Route

From the trail's western end in Joliet, the trail heads east along a slight incline, where the trail gains a small total of 200ft of elevation across the westernmost 8 miles of the trail. Most of this end of the trail cruises through a small residential and commercial area, although a forest buffer screens most of it.

As the trail continues east, it passes over an award-winning, arrowhead-shaped suspension bridge, which

takes trail users over US 45. As the trail approaches Frankfort, the trail's physical and spiritual center, trail users are welcomed with an archway overhead emblazoned with the trail's name. Here, the trail runs through Frankfort's historic downtown, which features many shops and restaurants. Also, on Sunday, a local farmer's market offers locally-grown produce and homemade baked goods from May through October.

As the trail passes through the Dewey Helmick and Old Plank Road Prairie Nature Preserves at the headwaters of Butterfield Creek, be sure to look for wildlife. These preserves feature more than 200 species of prairie plants that thrive there, attracting 170 bird species, such as bald eagles and herons, and mammals including muskrats, coyotes, and beavers.

As the trail approaches its eastern trailhead, the route passes the village of Park Forest's Rail Fan Park, a railroad aficionado's dream. This park features a raised viewing platform, where trail users can watch trains travel north-south and east-west on the Canadian National Railway, and watch them change directions along a giant clover-like interchange. From here, the trail meanders east until its eastern endpoint where the trail meets the Thorn Creek Trail.

Connections

In Frankfort, the trail intersects with the [Hickory Creek Bikeway](#).

In Matteson, the trail connects to the [Preservation Path](#).

At the trail's eastern end, the trail connects to the [Thorn Creek Trail](#).

The Old Plank Road Trail is part of the Great American Rail Trail, a 3,700-mile route from Washington to Washington D.C.



Old Plank Road Trail (IL)

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States: Illinois

Counties: Cook, Will

Length: 21.6 miles

Trail end points: 1109 E Washington St. (Joliet)
to Campbell Ave. (Chicago Heights)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Inline

Skating, Walking, Wheelchair Accessible, Cross
Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

The Old Plank Road Trail runs between 1109 E Washington St. (Joliet) and Campbell Ave. (Chicago Heights), with parking on the western end.

Parking is also available at:

- 1 N Park Rd (Joliet)
- Governor's Trail Park, 4160 Charleston Rd (Matteson)
- 1725 Western Ave (Chicago Heights)

Please see [TrailLink Map](#) for all parking options and detailed directions.



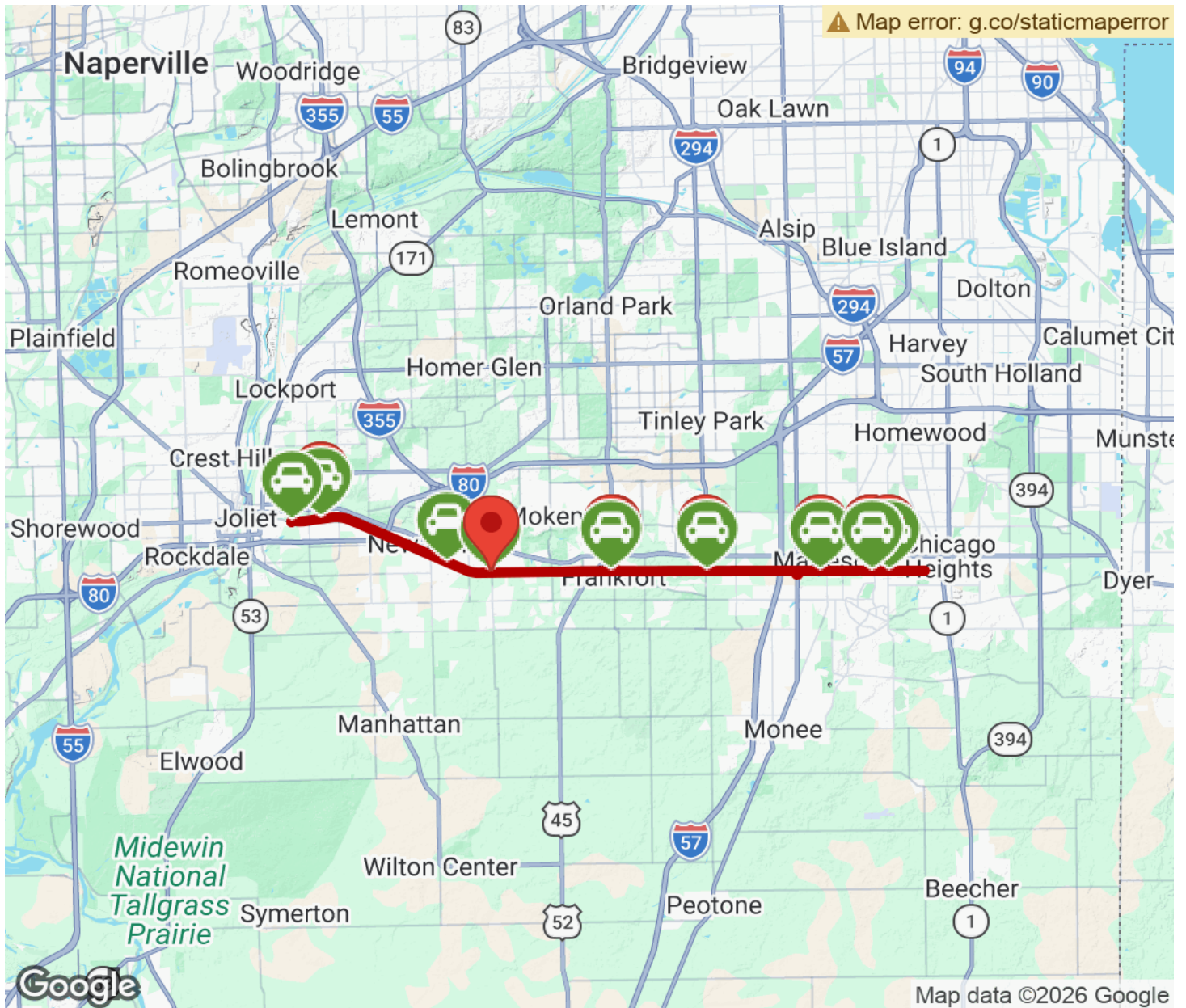
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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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