



2026

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides   



**MCT
Schoolhouse
Trail**
Illinois



MCT Schoolhouse Trail

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The Madison County Transit (MCT) Schoolhouse Trail offers a 15.5-mile flat, paved route through the eastern suburbs of greater St.



The Madison County Transit (MCT) Schoolhouse Trail offers a 15.5-mile flat, paved route through the eastern suburbs of greater St. Louis, Missouri, between Madison and Maryville, Illinois. Along the way, it meets two other trails that are part of the MCT's 130-mile network of nine interconnected trails, all of which are linked with public transit. This trail lies along an alignment of the old Illinois Traction System (later the Illinois Terminal Railroad) of electric trains that once connected St. Louis to Springfield. Other rail-trails in the state, such as the [Interurban Trail](#) in Sangamon County, also use this corridor, which the railroad stopped operating in the 1980s.

The route begins at a trailhead just west of Horseshoe Lake State Park in Madison, Illinois. You'll head south on the trail about 0.2 mile until it picks up the old railroad

corridor; it then crosses IL 203 on a girder bridge and heads east along the north side of the oxbow lake.

For a few miles, the trail shares this route with a utility corridor and passes industrial areas while Horseshoe Lake remains hidden. But be patient. At mile 3, the lake bursts into view when the path emerges from a pocket of trees. The lake offers excellent bird-watching, as nearly 300 species have been spotted here. The state park drains the lake's southern portion in late summer, drawing snowy egrets and great blue herons to feast on clams and snails. Watch for a connection on the left to the [MCT Nature Trail](#), which heads northeast toward Edwardsville.

Leaving the park, the trail crosses a bridge over IL-111, and then the trail takes on a more rural feel, with farms on both sides. You'll come upon the trail's namesake, Schoolhouse Branch, just before you pass under I-255, roughly the halfway mark for the trail. About 1.1 miles past the interstate, you'll arrive at the Metro East Park and Recreation District (MEPRD) trailhead on the outskirts of Collinsville. Just when it seems like more suburban sprawl will impinge your view, the trail plunges into woodlands behind very tidy neighborhoods. It is quiet through the hardwoods, disguising your proximity to a major interstate. The woods occasionally open up to offer glimpses of farm fields bordered by development.

As you enter the village of Maryville, a trail to the local YMCA joins from the right at 3.4 miles past the MEPRD trailhead. In an additional 1.2 miles, you'll pass Drost Park on the left. Consider stopping here for restrooms and drinking water, as the trail's endpoint has no facilities. It's another 1.2 miles to the [MCT Schoolhouse Trail](#) terminus at a junction with the [MCT Goshen Trail](#), which travels north 0.4 mile to parking and another 8 miles to Edwardsville. It connects with the [MCT Ronald J. Foster Heritage, Nature, Nickel Plate, and Watershed](#) Trails along the way.



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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MCT Schoolhouse Trail

Illinois

States: Illinois

Counties: Madison

Length: 15.5 miles

Trail end points: Harriston St. and Hare St.
(Madison) to MCT Goshen Trail near Frey Lane
and Vaughn Lane (Maryville)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Inline

Skating, Walking, Wheelchair Accessible

Parking & Trail Access

To reach the western trailhead in Madison: From I-55, take Exit 4 or 4B and head north on IL 203. Go 1.9 miles and turn left onto Harrison St. The trailhead and parking are immediately on the left.

To reach the eastern trailhead in Maryville: From I-55, take Exit 18 and head west toward Maryville on IL 162/Edwardsville Road at the end of the ramp. Go 0.8 mile to Old Troy Road and turn right. Parking for the MCT Goshen Trail is about 500 feet ahead on the right. From the parking lot, go south 0.4 mile on the Goshen Trail to the junction with the MCT Schoolhouse Trail.



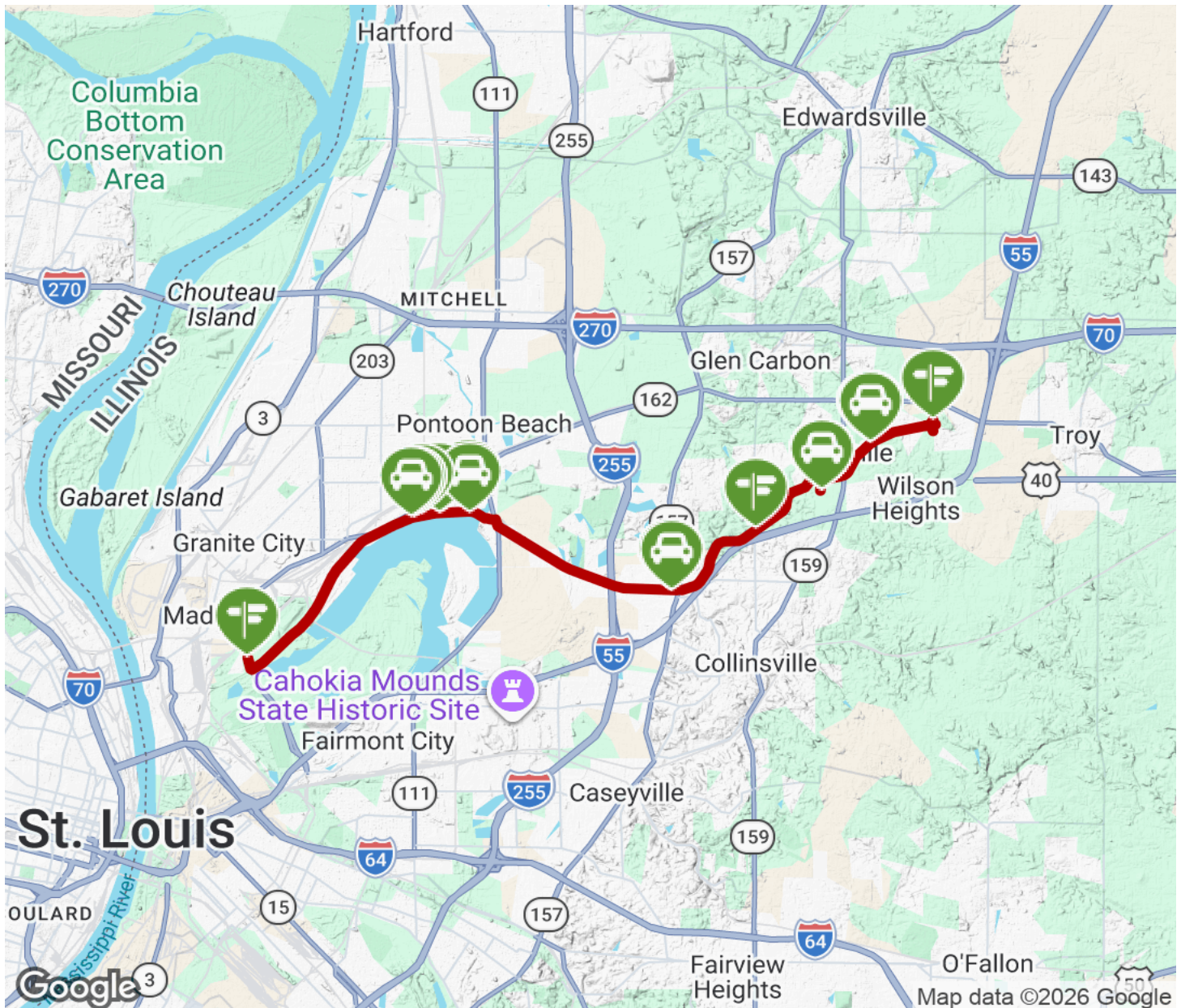
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MCT Schoolhouse Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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