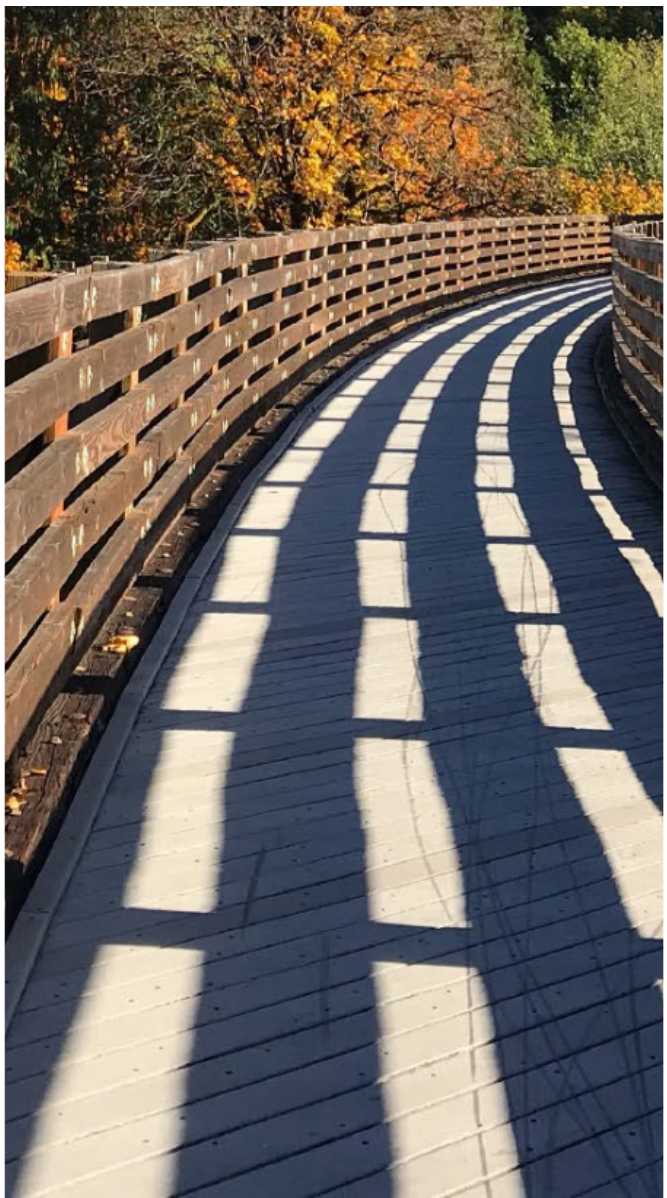
TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

2025

TrailLink Unlimited

Guides



Virgil L. Gilman Trail

Illinois

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The Virgil L. Gilman Trail travels from quiet forest and prairie lands to bustling neighborhoods in just 11.3 miles, linking a woodsy community college campus with the eastern Chicago suburb of Montgomery. The trail's namesake, Virgil Gilman, served as administrator of the Fox Valley Park District for 30 years and successfully championed public access to Fox River, as the public shoreline grew from 66 feet in 1946 to 20 miles during his tenure.

About the Route

Leaving off from the trail's western endpoint at the Waubonsee Community College, the westernmost mile of the trail crosses through native prairie for the first mile on asphalt and then travels on a short section of crushed stone (for 0.3 miles) before returning to a paved surface for the remainder of the trail. Back on the pavement, the trail heads back into the Bliss Woods Forest Preserve, which features large white and black oaks, as well as sycamore, white poplar, and cottonwood. Birders will enjoy spotting downy woodpeckers, cardinals, and blue jays along the path.

Leaving Bliss Woods, the route follows Blackberry Creek and crosses IL 56 on a pedestrian bridge 3.2 miles past the college. In 0.2 mile, a trail heads north into the 715-acre Aurora West Forest Preserve, an old farming area that's being restored to its natural state.

In another 1.3 miles, look for a path on the left that heads into Blackberry Farm. This living history replica of 19th-century pioneer life was created by Virgil Gilman as Pioneer Park and continues to be popular today.

Past the park, the trail rolls in between housing subdivisions and alongside an active railroad corridor, though thick vegetation screens both from the trail users. Arriving at Terry Avenue, the trail continues 0.5 miles on quiet side streets that are very easy to navigate. Take a left onto Terry Avenue, followed quickly by a right onto Rathbone Avenue. Follow Rathbone, and turn left immediately after an at-grade railroad crossing to regain the trail as the route enters Copley Park.

Leaving the park, the route passes beneath two railroad overpasses in quick succession and arrives at a circa 1897 railroad trestle across the Fox River in 0.4 mile. This is also a junction for the north-south Fox River Trail that runs 44 miles from Algonquin to Oswego.

After crossing the bridge and the riverside commercial district, the trail comes to its eastern endpoint after a 2.7-mile run through established Aurora neighborhoods with frequent street crossings. There's a little bit of wildness in the remaining 0.3 mile before the trail ends, however, as the trail crosses Waubonsie Creek, whose wetlands host migratory

Virgil L. Gilman Trail

Illinois

States: Illinois
Counties: Kane,Kendall
Length: 11.3miles
Trail end points: Waubonsee Community College (Sugar Grove) to Hill Ave. (Montgomery)
Trail surfaces: Asphalt,Concrete,Crushed Stone
Trail category: Rail-Trail
Trail activities: Bike,Inline Skating,Wheelchair Accessible,Walking,Cross

Parking & Trail Access

The Virgil L. Gilman Trail runs between Waubonsee Community College (Sugar Grove) and Hill Ave. (Montgomery), which both offer parking.

Parking is also available at:

- 3011 W Galena Blvd (Aurora)
- 39 Prairie St (Aurora)
- Lebanon Park, 1010 Lebanon St (Aurora)

See TrailLink Map for all parking options and detailed directions.

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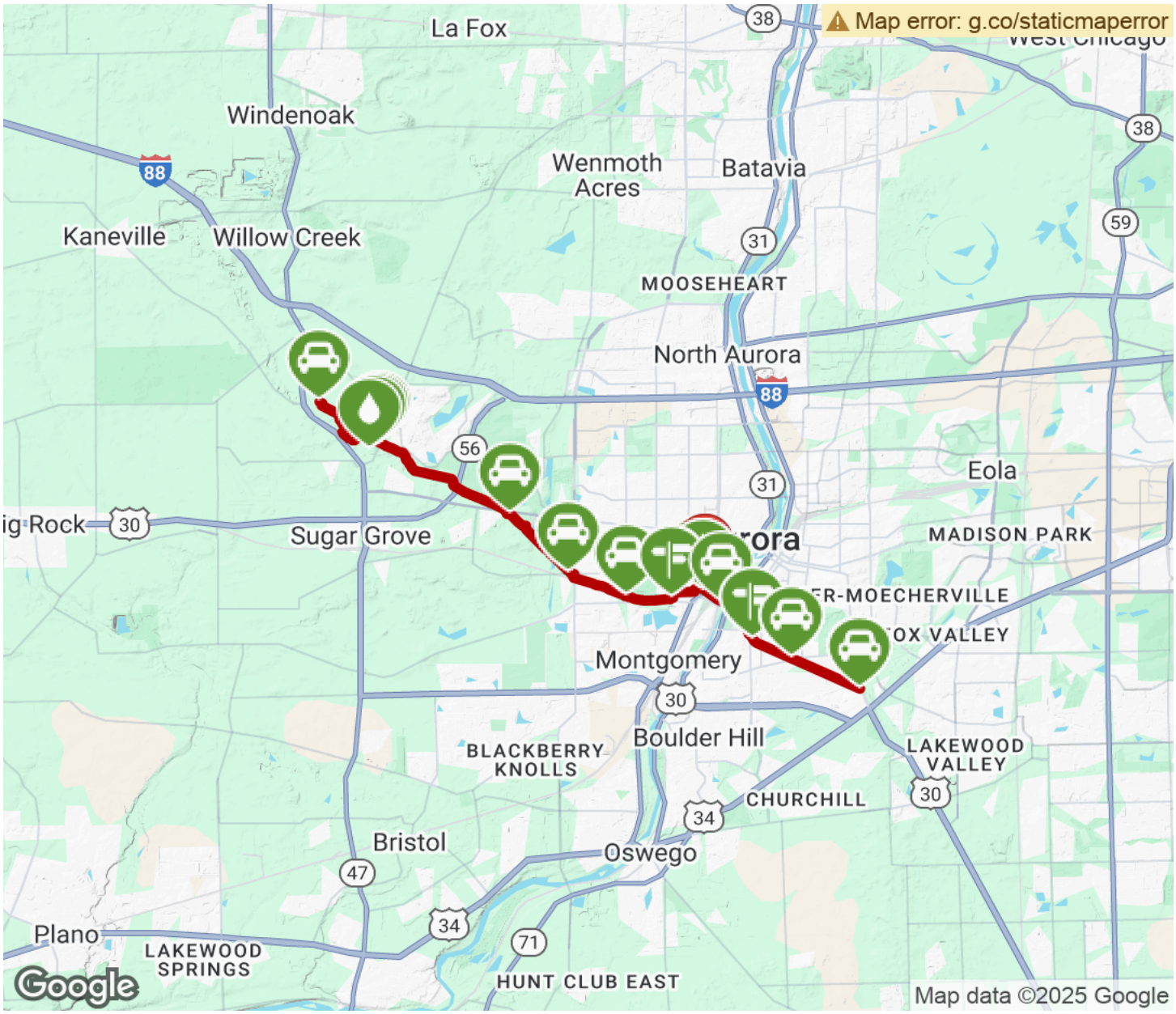

Trailhead Restroom Parking Water Fountain Tunnel

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