



2026

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Capital City State Trail

Wisconsin



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The Capital City State Trail contributes to the impression that you're never far from a bike path in the Madison area. The paved trail meanders for 17 miles from the suburb of Fitchburg in the southwest, through downtown Madison, to the eastern neighborhoods. It demonstrates why this area always ranks among the top bicycle-friendly communities.

About half the trail is located along former railroad right of ways: the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific Railroad along western Lake Monona, and the Chicago and North Western Railway in the east. Most of the trail comprises a collection of paths (the Nine Springs E-Way, the John Nolen Lakeshore Path, and the Isthmus and East Side Bike Paths) that were renamed into a single trail.

About the Route

Leaving off from Verona Frontage Rd. in Fitchburg, the trail heads east and in less than a mile, arrives at a "bike trail interchange" where several trails intersect including the Southwest Commuter Path, Badger State Trail, Cannonball Path, and connecting Military Ridge State Trail. Shortly after, the trail passes through a forest and enters a prairie planted by Fitchburg's Dawley Conservancy, where trail users can find restrooms, parking, and a bike-repair station.

The next section of trail alternates in and out of wooded park settings for about 2 miles to a pedestrian crossing over Fish Hatchery Road and a trail interruption at Glacier Valley Road (turn right on this street, and look for the trail on the left in 0.4 miles). For roughly the next 6 miles, the trail passes through the 2,500-acre Capital Springs State Park and Recreation Area, which features marshes, creeks, and lakes across a rolling golden terrain sparsely dotted with trees. Trail users can use the opportunity to learn about culture and pioneer settlement patterns at the Lussier Family Heritage Center at mile 8.3, next to a campground.

Look for Olin Park at mile 12 for breathtaking views of downtown Madison across Lake Monona. The Wingra Creek Bike Path on the left goes 2.2 miles to Henry Vilas Zoo, beaches at Vilas Park, and, farther on, a shady ride through the University of Wisconsin-Madison Arboretum. Continuing north, the Capital City State Trail runs alongside John Nolen Drive on a causeway that crosses the lake with exceptional views of the State Capitol dome.

The trail hugs the shoreline for a few blocks and passes the visually striking Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center designed by architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Farther on, the trail travels through historic Madison neighborhoods, including Schenk-Atwood-Starkweather-Yahara at mile 16, where the trail is flanked by community garden plots, bungalow-style homes, and shops. This



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States: Wisconsin

Counties: Dane

Length: 17.2miles

Trail end points: Verona Frontage Rd.
(Fitchburg) to Cottage Grove Road (Madison)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike, Fishing, Inline
Skating, Walking, Wheelchair Accessible

Parking & Trail Access

The Capital City State Trail runs between Verona Frontage Rd. (Fitchburg) and Cottage Grove Road (Madison).

Parking is available at:

- 410 S Blair St (Madison)
- Olin Park, 1156 Olin-Turville Ct (Madison)
- Dawley Conservancy, 2656 South Seminole Hwy (Fitchburg)

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



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

TrailLink.com