



A hazy, late afternoon ride on the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail

Photo by David Sommers

Saginaw Valley Rail Trail

The 11-mile Saginaw Valley Rail Trail is one of Michigan's nicest trails – 12 foot wide, paved, smooth, flat, fast and well maintained. Whether you enjoy running, biking, rollerblading, horseback riding, or a leisurely walk with man's best friend, you'll love this trail.

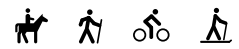
The linear park was the dream of local resident, Jim Garrett, who rode horses on the abandoned rail line in the 1980s and rallied public support for its development. Through a broad coalition of private, public and nonprofit funding, the property was purchased and construction began in 1999. Completed in 2009, the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail was designed, developed and currently owned and maintained by the Saginaw County Parks & Recreation Commission.

The trail offers three well developed access sites. The Van Wormer Road Trailhead is especially nice. We began our journey at Lumberjack Park in St. Charles, where we crossed a beautifully restored rail bridge over the Bad River. In all, the trail crosses seven restored railroad bridges over various creeks and rivers, passing by farms and a series of lush wetlands, including the Shiawassee River State Game Area and Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge.

Along the way, interpretive signs, scenic viewing platforms and several shelters and rest areas add a nice touch to your trail riding experience. Most of the trail is protected with a shady canopy of trees, a welcome relief on hot summer days. Equestrian use was thought fully integrated into the trail's design. A dedicated equestrian path meanders parallel to the paved trail from Entrepreneur Drive to Stroebel Road. The Van Wormer Road Trailhead offers the best access for equestrian use.

Thomas Township Trail

Opened in 2013, and extended north in 2018, the Thomas Township Trail connects the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail with the surrounding community. This nicely landscaped, paved trail travels 3.1 miles through quiet farmland to the new township trailhead just north of Gratiot Road (M-46). The Thomas Township Trail offers a great opportunity to add a few more scenic miles to your ride or run.



Saginaw Valley Rail Trail • Thomas Township Trail



The Saginaw Valley Rail Trail is smooth, flat, fast and well-maintained.