



Cross a restored rail bridge over the Bad River in St. Charles.

Photo by Ed Beaumont

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.

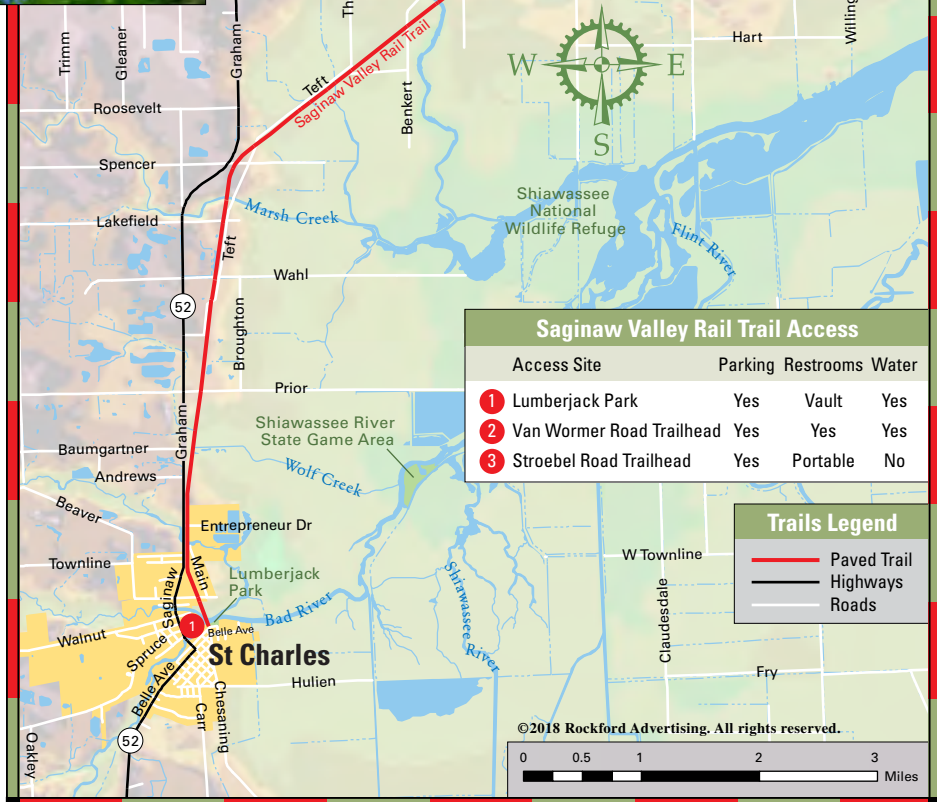
The linear park was the dream of local resident, Jim Garrett, who rode horses on the abandoned rail line in the 1980s and rallied public support for its development. Through a broad coalition of private, public and non-profit funding, the property was purchased and construction began in 1999. Completed 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 rail 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 natural canopy of trees, a welcome relief on hot summer days. Equestrian use was thoughtfully 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

Completed in 2013, the Thomas Township Trail connects the surrounding community to the Saginaw Valley Rail Trail. The new trail is nicely landscaped and paved with asphalt. This northern branch of the trail travels 2.3 miles to the township's public service building near the Meijer store and other retail businesses and restaurants on Gratiot Road (M-46). The Thomas Township Trail offers a great opportunity to add a few more scenic miles to your ride or run.



This nicely maintained paved trail is smooth, flat and fast.