Verona Segment  (Atlas Map 66f)

SNAPSHOT

6.4 miles: CTH-PD (McKee Rd.) to Prairie Moraine County Park at Wesner Rd.

This suburban segment makes good use of three county parks and links up to a variety of additional hiking and biking trails.

- At Reddan Soccer Park parking area (seasonal), Verona Public Library, Badger Prairie County Park main shelter (seasonal) and Centi Park Baseball Complex (seasonal).
- At the Dispersed Camping Area (DA21) in Badger Prairie County Park.
- In Badger Prairie County Park.

TRAIL ACCESS AND PARKING

CTH-PD (McKee Rd.): From Verona, at the intersection of Verona Ave. (Bus. Rt. USH-18/151) and CTH-M (Main St./Pleasant View Rd.), take CTH-M (Main St./Pleasant View Rd.) north 1.7 mi. At CTH-PD (McKee Rd.) turn right and go east 0.6 mi to the parking area on the south side of CTH-PD.

Prairie Moraine County Park at Wesner Rd.: From USH-18/151 south of Verona take Exit 79 onto CTH-PB and drive south 1.0 mi. At Wesner Rd. turn left to enter the Prairie Moraine County Park parking area.

Additional Parking: (i) Reddan Soccer Park parking area on Cross Country Rd. (No parking during tournaments.) (ii) Verona Public Library. (iii) Badger Prairie County Park (Exit 81 from USH 18/151). (iv) Military Ridge State Trail/Ice Age Trail access on Old PB Rd. just south of Verona Ave. (Exit 81 from USH 18/151). (v) Centi Park Sports Complex on the south side of E. Verona Ave. (vi) Lincoln St. foot/bike bridge parking at end of street.

THE HIKE

The Verona Segment travels through several park areas including the Ice Age Junction Area, Badger Prairie County Park and Prairie Moraine County Park. Hikers will encounter a number of spur/side trails and bike trails in these parks and therefore should pay close attention to Trail signage as only some of these trails are noted below.

The segment starts from the Ice Age Junction Area Trail access parking area on the south side of CTH-PD and makes its way west parallel to the road before bending south and traversing a prairie. The green space from CTH-PD south to Cross Country Road is the Ice Age Junction Area, an open space managed by the Dane County Parks Department that visually and physically separates Verona from southwest Madison. It hosts the Ice Age Trail and a paved bike trail. About 200 acres is restored prairie.

As the segment makes its way south through the prairie, it begins a slight descent toward a wooded area. A look to the south offers a fine overview of features hikers will encounter—the old water tower at Badger Prairie and the moraine on the horizon at the end of the segment, with CTH-PB’s cut through it.
The segment enters the wooded area and follows to the left at a fork. The segment travels south through another prairie before reaching a short spur trail (near a maintenance shed) that leads west to picnic tables and a kiosk display explaining the Dane County Parks Department’s prairie restoration and seed collection program. Additional displays about the Upper Sugar River Valley and the Ice Age Trail are located on the kiosk or nearby. Just beyond the kiosk is the northeast corner of the Reddan Soccer Park parking area.

The segment continues south and reaches Cross Country Road. The Trail runs west along a fence on the north side of Cross Country Road to the entrance of the soccer park and crosses the road at a marked pedestrian crossing. Hikers can find several restaurants 0.3 miles west on Cross Country Road. After crossing the road the segment enters Badger Prairie County Park and continues southward. The Trail quickly intersects with a mowed park path and briefly follows it west before turning south and ascending a ridge. Hikers can look to the southwest to see the prominent red-orange roof of the Verona Public Library, which is accessible via a spur trail that runs south to the park road or by a mowed bike path.

The segment crosses the top of the ridge and begins its descent first on a gravel road then on a mowed path. Just before reaching the park’s main shelter, the segment passes by a Dispersed Camping Area (DA21) in the restored prairie that dominates the park. Here multi-day long-distance hikers can camp legally in a minimally developed area. The site is NOT intended for those doing a one-night out-and-back hike.

After passing by the DCA and the main park shelter and parking area, the segment continues south, hooking up with a bike trail as it makes its way to Verona Avenue (CTH-MV). To access town services, hikers can head west on Verona Avenue 0.4 miles to a motel and another 0.5 miles to the town center.
The segment goes under Verona Avenue (CTH-MV) via a tunnel and continues southeast on the bike path to the Military Ridge State Trail (MRST) Park & Ride parking area. The multi-use MRST, connecting Madison to Dodgeville, is located on a railroad grade abandoned in the 1970s that once extended to Galena, IL.

The segment heads west on the MRST for approximately a quarter-mile, then just past the “3 Mile” marker departs from the MRST and makes its way south along the west side of Badger Mill Creek, which flows through a meltwater gap in the moraine. The segment passes a spur trail with a bike/pedestrian bridge over the creek with trails heading east and south to a residential neighborhood.

Continuing southwest the segment passes through a wetland area, running on top of a berm for part of the route. After dropping off the berm, the Trail meanders through a wooded creek bottom and a pine grove to a bridge where it crosses over to the east side of the creek, crosses a swampy area on a 275-foot boardwalk/puncheon span and eventually intersects with a paved spur trail that connects two residential neighborhoods. To the west, the spur trail leads across the creek on the Lincoln Street footbridge and connects with the street’s dead end. Lincoln Street provides access to Verona’s city center less than a mile away. To reach several restaurants, a supermarket and a hardware store, hikers can walk northwest via Lincoln Street, left on Valley View Street and right on South Main Street.

The segment moves south through woods in the meltwater gap, makes a steep ascent from the creek and heads around the east side of a quarry before reaching CTH-M. The Trail then continues southeast near or along CTH-M, crosses US Highway 18/151 and soon departs CTH-M making its way south along the edge of a field before entering woods and passing by several kettle ponds. The Trail continues eastward mostly through woods to CTH-PB. Hikers will see an oak and hickory restoration in progress. At the intersection with CTH-PB, hikers will need to briefly walk north to cautiously cross the road at the end of a median (DA6). Hikers can continue less than a quarter mile north on CTH-PB to a convenience store.

Upon crossing CTH-PB the segment enters a wooded area of the 160-acre Prairie Moraine County Park, which features a 0.8-mile-long stretch of the terminal moraine on St. Peter sandstone bedrock. The segment briefly makes its way south before heading southeastward, gently ascending along the north-northeast side of the terminal moraine through restored prairie and savanna. At the top of the moraine, a spur trail heads east to a viewing platform that offers views of a ravine cut in the moraine by meltwater and of the upper Sugar River Valley in the Driftless Area to the south.

From a saddle on the moraine, the segment descends westward using several short switchbacks, then curls southward to reach the Trail access at a gate in the northwestern corner of the park’s parking area near CTH-PB. The moraine and the Ice Age Trail are fenced off from a heavily used dog exercise area located in the southeastern area of Prairie Moraine Park.