

# NEWS

**Champaign County Forest Preserve District**  
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LAKE OF THE WOODS FOREST PRESERVE • HOMER LAKE FOREST PRESERVE • MIDDLE FORK RIVER FOREST PRESERVE  
HERON VIEW FOREST PRESERVE • SANGAMON RIVER FOREST PRESERVE • RIVER BEND FOREST PRESERVE • KICKAPOO RAIL TRAIL

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**November 6, 2025**

## **Construction to Begin on Next Phase of Kickapoo Rail Trail Connecting St. Joseph to Ogden**

Champaign County, IL — The Champaign County Forest Preserve District is pleased to announce that construction is expected to begin on the next segment of the Kickapoo Rail Trail (KRT), connecting the existing trail in St. Joseph to the Ogden portion, in November 2025. This 3.6-mile stretch is part of the final planned sections of the 24.5-mile multi-use trail that will ultimately link Urbana to Kickapoo State Park in Vermilion County.

Initial work will include site preparation along the former rail bed. While construction begins, the Forest Preserve District continues to work closely with Union Pacific Railroad to resolve the final crossing in St. Joseph—an essential link for trail continuity.

Work is expected to begin on the other remaining sections in 2026, including 8.4 miles of trail in Vermilion County and 0.5 miles in Urbana near Weaver Park. The Weaver Park Trailhead is expected to be completed in 2026. The KRT project received \$11.2 million in funding from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) through the Rebuild Illinois Capital Plan. However, the lowest construction bid for the completion of the trail exceeded available grant funds, leaving a \$1.85 million gap.

The goal of this grant funding, championed in 2020 by Representative Carol Ammons and the late State Senator Scott Bennett, was to complete the entire trail and expand the impact of this intergovernmental effort by enhancing regional connectivity.

To address the funding shortfall, the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation has launched a fundraising campaign to secure the remaining funds by April 1, 2026. Community support will be vital to completing this transformative project. Without sufficient funds, it is possible small sections of the trail will have to be completed after 2026. To donate, visit [onekrt.org/donate](http://onekrt.org/donate).

“We’re excited to move forward with construction and bring this incredible amenity closer to completion for the people and communities of Champaign and Vermilion Counties,” said Lorrie Pearson, Executive Director of the Champaign County Forest Preserve District.

The Kickapoo Rail Trail was conceptualized in the 1990s and began construction in 2016. It provides a safe, off-street transportation and recreation option that connects neighboring communities and brings people closer to nature. Upon completion, the KRT will span a full 24.5 miles from Urbana to Kickapoo State Park, with plans being developed to

eventually expand the trail into Danville. This last phase of construction will link communities, expand recreational access, and spur tourism-driven economic growth for the rural communities and numerous businesses along its route.

“Connecting the Kickapoo Rail Trail is about more than building a path — it’s about connecting people. This project brings our communities together while providing an accessible, scenic way for residents to stay active and enjoy the outdoors. It’s an investment that truly pays off by improving our region’s health, quality of life, and sense of community,” said Munice Mayor Blake Wells.

For updates and information on how to support the trail, visit [onekrt.org/project-updates](http://onekrt.org/project-updates).

For questions, contact Sam Ihm, Planning Director, Champaign County Forest Preserves at [sihm@ccfpd.org](mailto:sihm@ccfpd.org) or call 217-586-3360.