

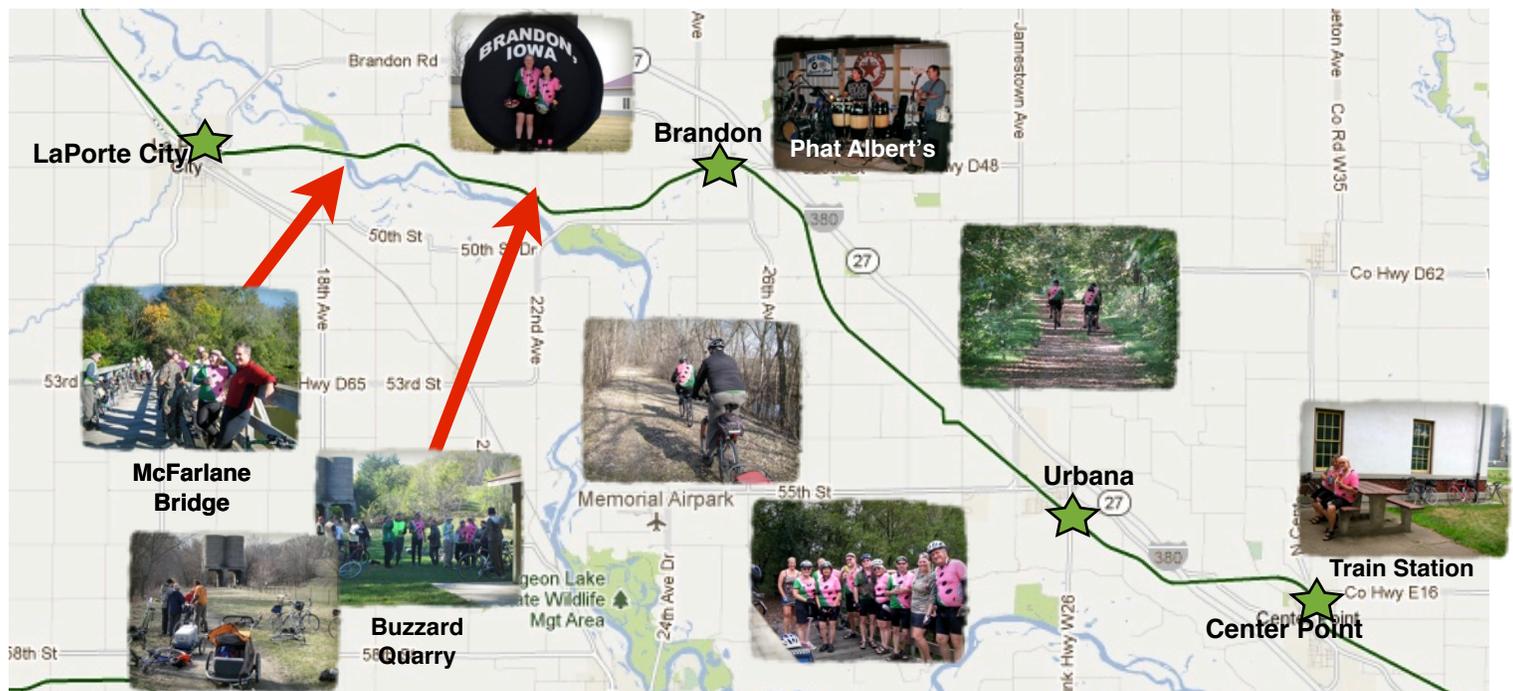
Middle of CVNT Trail Ride - 58 miles

Center Point, Urbana, Brandon, LaPorte City & back

There are many fall rides you can do, but few compare to a fall ride on the [Cedar Valley Nature Trail](#). The trail is a converted intercity commuter line between Cedar Rapids and Waterloo. Because it is an old rail bed, it is flat and for the most part has a canopy of trees covering the trail. It mostly follows the Cedar River and thus reflects that in its name. The entire trail is 52 miles in length from Cedar Rapids to Evansdale (near Waterloo). However, due to urban sprawl of those ending towns, the middle of the trail remains the best part. Due to lower bike traffic, the middle part of the trail is still crushed limestone, while the urban ends are paved. If the weather has been dry...the limestone surface works just fine for a road bike.

You may begin your ride at the train station (inset picture) in Center Point. Center Point is about 15 minutes north of Cedar Rapids just off of I-380. The restored depot was used by the inter-urban line and is now used for restrooms, information and rest area. Free parking is available.

About three miles into the ride you will pass through a tunnel beneath I-380. It is long and can get spooky during a night ride. In about 6 miles you will arrive in Urbana. Although Urbana has the O-Zone Bar and Grill, the owner does not keep it open during lunch hours. Best food option is the Casey's near the interstate exit. Great subs!



From Urbana, the trail goes through some open land until it gets back into tree canopy. You will also cross many roadways along the trail in this area. Take caution while crossing. Look both ways. It is about a 10 mile ride to Brandon.

Arriving in Brandon, the trail is on south side of town. You will see what appears to be an old depot (not sure). There take a right and head to Phat Albert's (inset picture) for a brew. They used to have free peanuts, but like all else, the economy ate them all. There is also a small store in Brandon. No directions required. While in Brandon, get your photo taken in the World's Largest Cast Iron Skillet (inset picture). Located near community center it only adds two blocks to the ride.

Brandon to LaPorte City is the most scenic part of the trail; but was also the most damaged by the flood of 2008. Many repairs have been or are being made, including the McFarlane Bridge. About 5 miles from Brandon, you will come across Buzzard's Quarry (inset pictures). It is no longer used except as a fishing hole and trail rest stop. The old silos for filling rail cars are still there, but are mostly used as a latrine. There is also a covered picnic table and benches.

From here the trail get very scenic as it follows the river. You see evidence of the river's fury carved into the limestone bluffs. Take a break at the few remaining benches not damaged by the flood. Enjoy this section!

In about 4 more miles you will arrive at the McFarlane Bridge. This was severely damaged in 2008, but is scheduled to reopened in May 2013. The alternate route is via roads, but I will not cover them since bridge repair is near completion. About a 1/2 mile past the bridge is McFarlane Park. From this point forward, the trail is paved.

In about 3 miles, you will arrive in LaPorte City. If you are a fried chicken lover, there is a great restaurant downtown, but it's name eludes me. By the ball diamond, there's a large gazebo and great place to have lunch. The paved trail continues from there to Gilbertville and eventually Evansdale (Waterloo).

There used to be a trail fee; however, trail conditions since the flood have not warranted it. Now with all the improvements, I expect the trail fees and tags to return. Purchase at any nearby convenience stores. We always pay trail fees...it is worth it!