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PARK IT IN OZAUKEE COUNTY: Hitting the Ozaukee Interurban Trail

By Marcia Schwager, Photos by Liz Doering

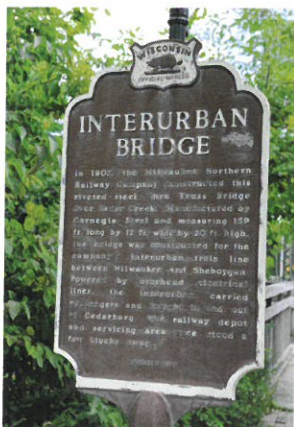
Fall is a wonderful time of the year in Wisconsin and what better way to enjoy the fall season than during a bike ride on the Ozaukee Interurban Trail. This 30-mile trail follows the route of the former Interurban railway that connected Ozaukee County to the City of Milwaukee and Sheboygan. The paved trail spans the entire county with most of the trail being off-road and perfect for family enjoyment. And, unlike many recreational trails in the State of Wisconsin, use of the Ozaukee Interurban Trail is free for everyone.

According to the website, "In 1922, the right-of-way was acquired by The Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company for development of an improved rapid transit service from Milwaukee to Sheboygan. The Northern Route, the interurban electric railway from Milwaukee to Sheboygan since 1908, had stops in the mostly rural communities of Brown Deer, Thiensville, Cedarburg, Grafton, Port Washington, Belgium, Cedar Grove, Oostburg and Sheboygan. This rapid transit was an electric railway system linking Milwaukee and many of the surrounding communities from its inception in 1905 to the end of all operations in 1951. During its operation, the Northern Route of the interurban line was also made famous for transporting African-American blues musicians to the main recording studio for *Paramount Records* recording label in Port Washington and ultimately in Grafton, Wisconsin."

Today, the current trail connects the Ozaukee communities of Mequon, Thiensville, Cedarburg, Grafton, Port Washington and Belgium by using the existing right-of-way owned by VVe Energies.

The trail, designated as a Great Wisconsin Birding Trail, is intended for year-round uses, such as biking, in-line skating, walking, running and cross-country skiing. However, motorized vehicles including snowmobiles and horses are not allowed on the trail and dogs must be leashed. People are asked to use the trail with C.A.R.E. (Courtesy, Awareness, and Respect for Everyone).

Milwaukee area residents Katie Wysocky and Pat Nowak enjoy coming a bit farther north to use the Ozaukee Interurban Trail. "We usually go on rides between 20 and 30 miles. The trail offers a lot of different scenery and terrain for a bike ride. Nice open fields, some more shaded areas with a lot of trees and gorgeous views of the lake when you swing through Port. It's a very smooth ride and you don't need to worry about potholes or large cracks like you sometimes need to on



streets. There are also a lot of great stops along the way and/or places to finish at and enjoy some food and drinks! It's a great way to spend an afternoon."

Created to assist in the planning and implementation of the trail, The Ozaukee Interurban Trail Advisory Council was formed with the mission "to promote the safe public use of the Ozaukee Interurban Trail for transportation, recreation, health, education, economic development, and enjoyment of Ozaukee County's unique cultural, historical and natural resources." The Advisory Council is a diverse representation of all areas of the community in Ozaukee County. Fundraisers are held periodically to benefit the trail.

For trail maps and more information, visit www.interurbantrail.us.



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