

The Bolt Report

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[WARNING]: This email was sent from someone outside of the City of Burlington.

The Bolt Report confirms that what they are running in Burlington is not a point-to-point alternate transportation system. It is in fact a cannibalize-the-summer-tourist-bike-path-market system. Exactly what we were told it would not be.

Two thirds of all Bolt ebike users came from the Penny Lane hub: 2,217 users out of a total of 3,743 pay as you go customers. The 149 users in the other plans are almost meaningless given those numbers.

And it looks like the pay as you go rentals were for a longer distance - a whopping 3.68 miles on average versus 1.5 miles for the plans and 54.22 minutes on average, versus 27 to 40 minutes for the other plans. Obviously the joy rides on the Bike Path are longer and take more time. So much for Nic Anderson's assurances early on in the Bike Share process, trying to convince us that hourly pricing would be so high "people would be crazy to use bike share for an extended tour of the Bike Path." Although Bolt won't tell us how much of their total income in 2021 came from the Penny Lane hub, given the numbers above it's obvious that at least three quarters of their entire income last year came from the Penny Lane hub.

What Bolt is doing is funding their so-called point-to-point system by siphoning off the summer tourist ebike rental market. By allowing Bolt to maintain a rack for immediate on-the-spot ebike rentals on the side of the Bike Path at Penny Lane, the City has given Bolt a green light to cannibalize the summer ebike rental market that Burlington Segways and Electric Bikes relies upon. Local Motion, North Star Sports and Ski Rack also rely upon rentals in this market. I believe all the local bike shops lost ebike rental business to the Bolt ebikes on Penny Lane last summer. We were told that Gotcha, now Bolt, would not do that, but it's obvious that's exactly what they are doing.

The heat and ride maps confirm this as well. The vast majority of Bolt ebikes rented last summer were used on the Bike Path. Many of them went all the way out past the Winooski River bridge to the Causeway. How many Bolt ebikes went out to the Causeway? That is not revealed anywhere. It would also appear that many of those ebikes were abandoned out on the Bike Path. Is that because they were not working correctly? I would like to see complaints of Bolt ebike users to see what's going on there.

At Burlington Segways and Electric Bikes we make certain our ebikes are fully charged and in good working order before they go out on the Bike Path. I assume the other local bike shops do the same. If the ebike breaks down we will replace it, sometimes delivering a replacement ebike miles away, including the Champlain Islands. What is the rate at which Bolt ebikes fail? What does Bolt do for the customer when the bike fails?

The solution to this is simple. Move the Penny Lane rack to Battery Park. You wouldn't have any further objections to Bolt from us if you did that because then you would have a real point-to-point system. As long as the rack at Penny Lane remains there, or anywhere else on the Bike Path, our ox is being gored and you will be hearing me scream bloody murder about this.

Don't let this out-of-town corporation take over the summer ebike rental market in Burlington at the expense of the local bike shops.

Please move the Penny Lane rack.

Rick Sharp

P.S. I had to laugh at the sustainability statement that 22,222 lbs. of carbon emissions had been saved. That fails to take account of all the cars that were driven to the waterfront to rent an ebike from the Penny Lane rack of course.