

Boston bike share program, Hubway, to roll out again in early March

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(Dina Rudick/Globe Staff / File photo)

Last fall, Vince Bowden of Ohio checked out the rows of bikes that are part of Boston's bike sharing program. He previously owned a bicycle store and thought the Hub's inventory looked great.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Hubway, the bike-sharing program that debuted in Boston last summer, will roll out once again in early March, officials said.

This week, workers began re-installing some of the program's bicycle-borrowing kiosks at locations across the city, said Nicole Freedman, who heads the city's Boston Bikes program, which helped initiate the New Balance Hubway bike-share system that [began late last July](#).

Like last year, there will be 60 stations and about 600 bikes in total once Hubway fully launches, she said in a phone interview today. Most stations will be in the same spots as a year ago, though there may be some tweaks in an effort to optimize usage, she said.

About 40 of the stations that are located either on private property or on sidewalks are expected to be available for use on or around March 1, when the program will start a "soft-launch," said Freedman.

The remaining 20 stations, which are located either on roadways or in curbside parking spaces, are expected to be installed shortly after St. Patrick's Day, the city's bikes boss said.

Meanwhile, some 30 new stations holding an additional 300 bikes are [expected to debut](#) in Somerville and Cambridge this year, she said. Each of those two cities are in the process of finalizing contracts with Hubway's operator, Alta Bicycle Share, and "if all goes well," the bike-share program will expand to the areas north of the Charles River around mid-summer, Freedman said.

She said the planned time frame for installing stations and starting operations could change if there is inclement weather -- something not witnessed in a relatively long while.

Amid the recent, seasonably-warm weather, "people were very interested, and we were all like 'wow, it could've been a really great to have kept [the bike-share program] running all winter,'" she said. "But, the thing is we couldn't predict the future."

So, late last November, the fledgling program packed up and shut down for the winter-that-never-was, and it will start next month as it was scheduled to all along.

Despite the mild temperatures and the regional ground hog's [prediction of an early spring for New England](#), there will be no early start for Hubway.

"We still can't predict the future," Freedman said, referencing how, as unlikely as it may seem this winter, in this region the potential for late-winter ice, snow and cold can never be discounted entirely.

About 140,000 trips were recorded in Hubway's first four months last year.

"It's been great," said the city's bikes program leader. "The public has been true partners in this effort. They've been learning along with us throughout this process."

The program allows users to rent bicycles from various automated stations placed around some parts of the city. When they're done using a bike, a rider can return it to any kiosk.

Hubway's pricing structure is expected to be the same as last year, said Freedman.

For more information about the program, visit www.thehubway.com.

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