

Watch City Bike Lab 2024

Annual Report to the Charles River Museum of Industry and Innovation

Our Mission

The Watch City Bike Lab is a volunteer-run community bicycle workshop providing the space, tools, equipment, and knowledge-sharing to empower people of all backgrounds to repair and maintain their own bicycles for free or at nominal cost. We encourage and promote experiences related to repair and re-use versus replacement or disposal of damaged items.

What we do

The Watch City Bike Lab began its volunteer operations at the Museum in 2016, holding free, open bicycle clinics for the public every Sunday from late spring/early summer through October. We have continued every year since 2016 with the exception of 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

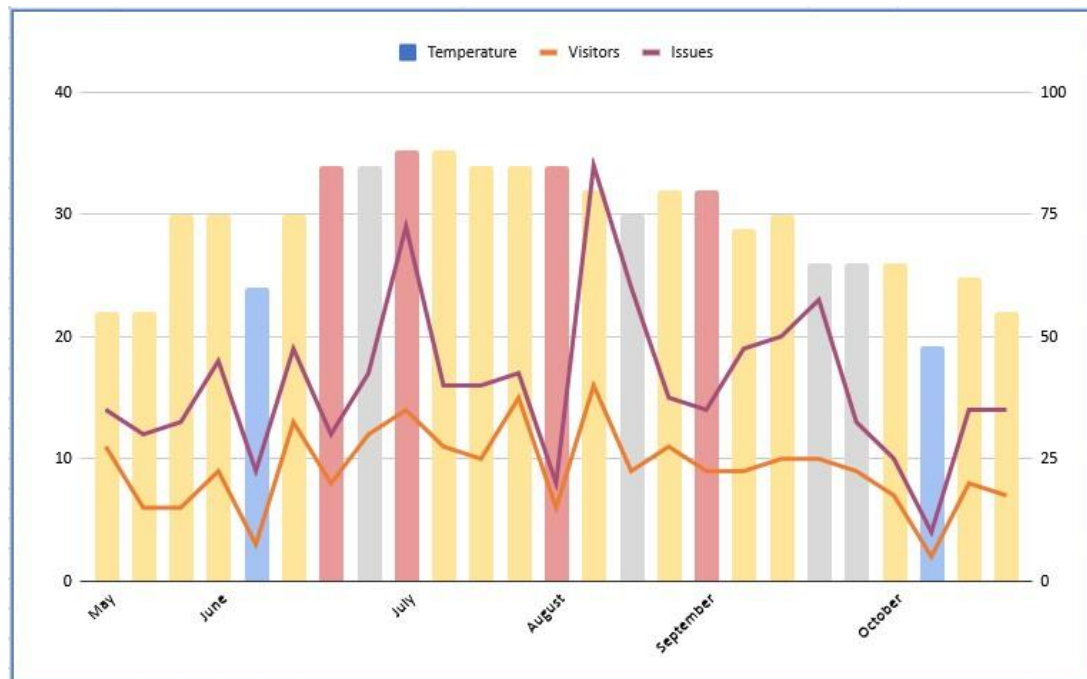
Our tools and supplies are stored inside the Innovator wing of the museum; one organizer (Leo Keightley) has key and alarm code access to the building. Volunteers set up repair stands, tools, signage, etc. outdoors by the river entrance to the museum. During open hours, we place six directional signs along the river path on both sides of the Charles River to let passersby know we are open and are providing free bike help.



The year in review

In 2024, we ran 25 weekly, four-hour “open lab” sessions for the public from May 12 - October 27. We were pleased to welcome two new volunteers this year. As a result of their involvement, our volunteer hours as well as the number of issues we handled increased over 2023.

	2023	2024	% CHANGE
# Sessions	24	25	4%
# Open hours	92	101	9%
# Volunteer hours	258	377	32%
# Visitors	193	231	16%
# Issues	270	404	33%



Temperature Bars: Colors:

Yellow - sunny

Blue - rainy

Red - muggy

Gray - cloudy

To provide volunteers and visitors some respite from the sun on hot days, this year the Downtown Waltham Partnership generously loaned us one of their 10' x 10' canopy tents.



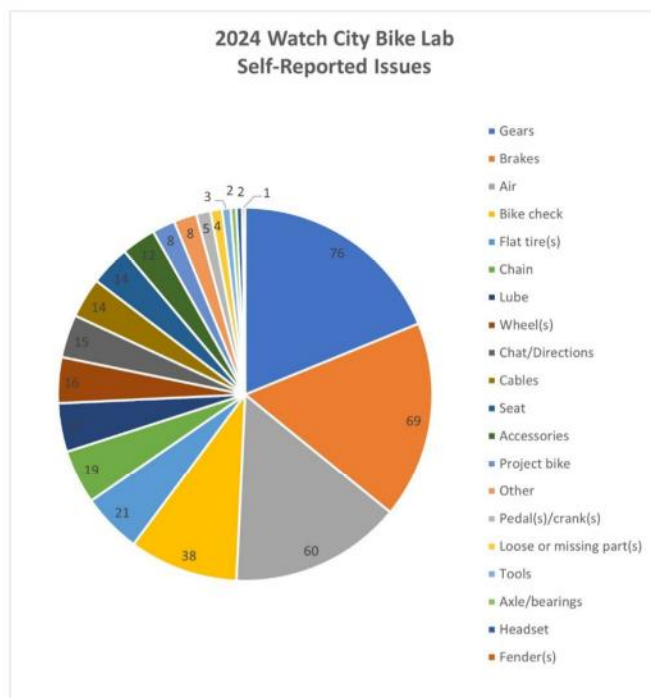
On days that were dangerously hot, too cold, or very rainy, we set up just inside the door.



When the weather kept activity low, we sometimes worked on our own bikes or retrieved trash from the Charles River. 😊



Issues are reported by visitors when they sign in. These often turn into other issues, especially with "bike check," which is a request to look over a bike for safety and routine maintenance concerns. A "project bike" is one that may or may not be in any sort of working condition. The owner wants help evaluating whether or not the bike can be salvaged, and if so, the work typically takes place over multiple sessions. The category "Tools" indicates that the visitor primarily worked independently, using our bike tools on site.



Our friendly neighbors in the mill apartments stop by often to watch or chat with us. Sometimes we help them repair personal items such as shopping carts and walkers.



Looking ahead to 2025

Donations, which were down in 2023, rebounded significantly in 2024. We made the option of donating more obvious. It is also possible that as we are better known, there is increased awareness that donations are our primary source of operational cash.

Electronic donations are picking up also. Please let us know if there are concerns or specific procedures we should follow for electronic donations. In 2024, we directed people to the Museum's Venmo account as well as the Museum's donation page.

We hope to operate on a similar schedule again in 2025. Please contact us anytime with any questions or concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Creedon, Eamon Dawes, Harry Friedman, Leo Keightley, Nathan Phillips, and Adam Scotto

Photo gallery



