

Pedal-powered pub? New vehicle to let riders drink in the sights of Syracuse



A depiction of of The Big Yellow Fellow, a pedal-powered pub on wheels. Rendering shows the pub parked in front of the Onondaga Historical Association on Montgomery Street. Rendering by Michael Giannattasio of SALT Makerspace. *(Michael Giannattasio)*

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SYRACUSE, NY -- The way Michael John Heagerty sees it, Syracuse deserves (and maybe even needs) a pedal-powered pub.



Michael John Heagerty (left) and Mike Giannattasio,

partners in the plans to build a pedal-powered pub on wheels to take tours around Syracuse. *Don Cazentre*

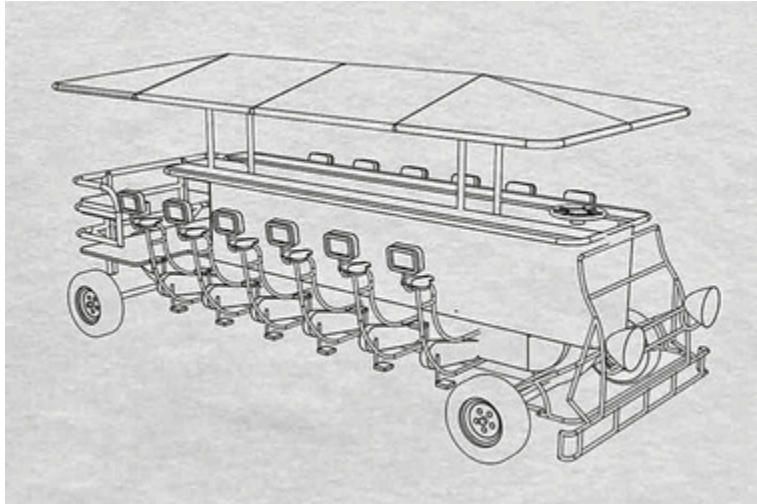
It's a touring bicycle built for a dozen or more sightseers -- with its own onboard beer kegs.

"Syracuse is a drinking town, and it's starting to develop a biking culture -- and there's lots to see," said Heagerty, who, among other enterprises, leads [the NoExcuses "alternative" walking tours](#) around town. ""What better way to put all that together?"

Heagerty and his partner in pedaling, Mike Giannattasio, are the driving forces behind the plan to bring a pubcycle to Syracuse, possibly in time for the 2016 St. Patrick's Day parade. It's based on similar vehicles operating in places ranging from the Netherlands to Nashville, and several Upstate New York versions, including Albany's [Capital City Brewcycle](#) and [Rochester's Pedal Pub](#).

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Heagerty and Giannattasio are calling theirs the "Yellow Fellow," because it will owe its bright yellow color and some of its design features to bicycles by that name manufactured in Syracuse around the turn of the 20th century by the E.C. Stearns Co..



A line drawing of the planned Yellow Fellow pedal-

powered pub. Rendering by Mike Giannattasio *Mike Giannattasio*

But there's lots of work to do, including figuring out the look, size, engineering and construction. All of it will be done locally.

"We're not outsourcing anything," said Giannattasio, who is also director of the [SALT Makerspace](#), a hub for local artists and inventors. "All the design, fabricating everything is done in Central New York."

What is a pedal-powered pub? It's a trailer-sized vehicle (or the size of a Cadillac Escalade, Giannattasio jokes.). It's powered by 12 or 14 people facing inward (and each other), 6 or 7 to a side. They use bicycle pedals to power the gears that propel the vehicle. There are a couple of seats for non-pedalers in back (and space for at least one wheelchair).

The driver sits in front, steering and applying the brakes. In the space between the pedal-pushers is a walkway, where the tour guide (most likely Heagerty in this case), can point out the sights and serve drinks. There is a platform in front of the riders to place their drinks.

It won't move very fast. And "it's not going to be good on hills, so that will affect our routes," Heagerty said.



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Heagerty, whose NoExcuses tours focus heavily on Syracuse history, is especially excited to tap into the history of the Yellow Fellow bicycles once made in Syracuse and sold around the country, starting in the 1890s. The original Stearns manufacturing facility was on Oneida Street, he discovered doing research at the Onondaga Historical Association.

The company also had great marketing skills: A stunt rider hired by Stearns once rode a Yellow Fellow up the steps of the U.S. Capitol in Washington. "Every newspaper that had ink at the time covered that," Heagerty said.

Heagerty and Giannattasio believe that entrepreneurial spirit can be brought back to life in Syracuse. They've already won enthusiastic support from the OHA and others in town.

They've also set up a [money-raising effort at gofundme.com](#). They hope to raise \$16,000 for the project.

Getting the Yellow Fellow mobile pub on the road by St. Patrick's Day may be ambitious. But Heagerty hopes to be able to take it out to festivals and other

events in the summer, and perhaps conduct some pub crawls as the versions in other cities do.

"It seems like a good fit for Syracuse," he said. "People like to drink and socialize and get out on the town. The Yellow Fellow is built for that."

Want to see how a pedal pub works? Check out this video:

Don Cazentre writes about food, beverages, restaurants and bars for syracuse.com and [The Post-Standard](http://The-Post-Standard.com). Contact him by [email](#), on [Twitter](#), at [Google+](#) or via [Facebook](#).