

Not a car or bicycle, but a blend—an ELF vehicle

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This photo taken July 24, 2013 shows the Organic Transit's ELF bike in a parking lot in Reston, Va. It's the closest thing yet to Fred Flintstone's footmobile _ only with solar panels and a futuristic shape. It's an "Organic Transit Vehicle," a car-bicycle blend also known as an ELF bike, and 65-year-old family therapist Mark Stewart is taking it on a 1,200-mile journey along the East Coast Greenway, a bike and pedestrian trail that runs from Florida to Canada. (AP Photo/Valerie Bonk)

A Massachusetts man is taking his car-bicycle blend "Organic Transit Vehicle"—also known as an ELF bike—on a 1,200-mile trip from North Carolina to Massachusetts this summer, turning heads as the unusual-looking green vehicle zips through city streets.

What Mark Stewart is driving looks like a cross between a bicycle and a car with [solar panels](#), a gently humming motor and a futuristic shape. It's a "green" option for today's commuters.

"It reminds me of when I saw a Smart car the first time," said Joanne Bury as she emerged from her Reston condominium building to take a look at the [vehicle](#). "This is incredible. What is it?"

Stewart, a 65-year-old family therapist and school psychologist from Cambridge, Massachusetts, took the summer off in order to drive his new vehicle more than 1,200 miles (1,930 kilometers) on trails and roads using the East Coast Greenway, a bike and pedestrian trail that runs from Canada to Key West.

Stewart began his journey by flying down to Durham, North Carolina, on July 15, and estimates that the entire trip will take about a month. He covered the first leg, from Durham to Reston, Virginia, over roughly five days, 60 miles (95 kilometers) at a time.

The ELF, or "Organic Transit Vehicle," can go for 1,800 miles (2,895 kilometers) on the energy equivalent of a gallon of gasoline. It does not require the insurance, repair and car maintenance costs of the average vehicle. Besides the cost of the occasional new tire, the ELF runs completely off what it costs to charge its battery.



This photo taken July 24, 2013 shows ELF bike owner Mark Stewart describing the features of his bike during a rest stop in Reston, Va. It's the closest thing yet to Fred Flintstone's footmobile _ only with solar panels and a futuristic shape. It's an "Organic Transit Vehicle," a car-bicycle blend also known as an ELF bike, and 65-year-old family therapist Mark Stewart is taking it on a 1,200-mile journey along the East Coast Greenway, a bike and pedestrian trail that runs from Florida to Canada. (AP Photo/Valerie Bonk)

Stewart bought the ELF from Durham-based Organic Transit, which sells them for a base price of \$5,000. He said he wanted to avoid the almost \$1,000 delivery charge, so he decided to fly down to pick up the bike in person and learn how to operate it before taking the long trip back home.

"I spent three days in the shop hanging with the guys there and learning

the vehicle," Stewart said. "This is just an unsupported solo trip up here in a vehicle that nobody else really knows."

Stewart's ELF is only about the 40th to come off the production line. While few bike shop workers have seen the contraption, the materials, such as the tires and pedals, are items on your average bicycle.

Organic Transit CEO Rob Cotter took technology from aircraft, boats and bicycles and incorporated them into a "green" 130-pound (59-kilogram) vehicle. He was consulting on bike-sharing technologies being considered by New York City when he saw there was a market for his vehicle.

"A combination of environmental catastrophes, high fuel costs, climate change and a migration of people moving to the cities all combined for a trend of people looking for an automotive alternative. But not everyone can fit a bicycle into their daily life," Cotter said.

Demand has grown significantly, and Organic Transit has opened a second factory. The company is working on its 75th bike, with more than 200 already sold or reserved with a deposit.



This photo taken July 24, 2013 shows ELF bike owner Mark Stewart taking a ride in his bike in Reston, Va. It's the closest thing yet to Fred Flintstone's footmobile _ only with solar panels and a futuristic shape. It's an "Organic Transit Vehicle," a car-bicycle blend also known as an ELF bike, and 65-year-old family therapist Mark Stewart is taking it on a 1,200-mile journey along the East Coast Greenway, a bike and pedestrian trail that runs from Florida to Canada. (AP Photo/Valerie Bonk)

While the ELF is classified as a bicycle by Organic Transit, the laws surrounding such a vehicle vary. In the District of Columbia, where Stewart's GPS was taking him, the ELF is not allowed on the bike trails and paths. The city classifies it as a motorized bicycle.

"They can't operate the unit on a sidewalk, they can't park on a street and they can't operate on off-street bike trails or bike routes," said Monica

Hernandez of the city's Department of Transportation. "The only thing you can do (on the street) is stop to unload or load the unit."

Stewart says so far he's only gotten looks of curiosity.

"A lot of cops have gone by me no one's said boo. They'll look, they're interested but they don't question its right to be on the road," Stewart said.

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