

From Witch City to Segway City

2 companies to choose from for 2-wheeled tours in Salem

By Tom Dalton

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SALEM — It's not that this is a Guinness World Record, but it does seem curious that a small city like Salem has two Segway operators.

Salem has one train depot, one bus line, one ocean ferry, one tourist trolley — and possibly more Segways per capita than Amsterdam has bicycles.

Witch City Segway, which arrived last fall, operates out of a warehouse on Derby Street behind Brother's Deli.

Salem Seggliders, which had a ribbon-cutting this week, opened in the old West Coast Video store at the corner of Lafayette and New Derby.

That makes two Segway operators at opposite ends of the same street.

Segways — two-wheeled, self-balancing, battery-powered personal transportation vehicles — were only unveiled to the public in 2001. A decade later, there are Segway tour businesses in most major cities.

Boston has two Segway businesses, but it also has 600,000 people.

So why are there two Segway businesses in Salem, a city of 41,000?

"Because there are a million tourists coming here every year," said Victor Cora of Salem Seggliders.

Jeff Langone and Brad Biscornet, the brothers-in-law who own Witch City Segway, were blown away when they came to Salem on an overcast day last August and saw people — lots of people — roaming the downtown.

"As soon as we got here, we said, 'Yeah, this is the



Urias O'Keefe, chief tour operator at Salem Seggliders, maneuvers a segway vehicle inside the business. Ken Yuskus/Staff photo



Rick Buchanan of Peabody, left, and John Greener of Salem learn how to operate a Segway at Witch City Segway last month. Staff file photo

place," Biscornet said

While acknowledging they are in the same business, the two companies insist they are friendly competitors. There will not be Segway jousting on the pedestrian mall, they say, nor anything like the trolley or witch wars of recent years.

"It's really not butting heads," Cora said. "There's enough business for both of us."

The two businesses are not exactly strangers.

Salem Seggliders is affiliated with Boston Gliders, a Segway tour businesses in Boston and Florida. Witch City Segway is an independent company that has a business relationship with Segway of Boston, which operates out of the Museum of Science and gives tours in Boston.

Thus, the two Boston operators are, in a sense, facing off in Salem.

The city is prepared for the Segway invasion. It passed a Segway ordinance last fall laying our rules — no more than six Segways on one trip — and routes the tour operators can follow.

City officials are even catching Segway fever. City Councilor Joan Lovely went for a ride, as did Destination Salem Director Kate Fox. Even Christian Day, a witch, took a ride this week in his hat and flowing robe.

With two competing businesses, the possibility exists that 16 Segways — eight from each tour company — could meet head-on one day this summer in the city's first Seg-jam.

"Hopefully, the sidewalks are big enough," Biscornet said with a grin.

GETTING AROUND SALEM

Witch City Segway, 283 Derby St.

Salem Seggliders (Segways and electric bikes), 76 Lafayette St.

Salem Trolley, 8 Central St.

Salem Pedicabs, Liberty Street

Salem Cycle (bike rentals), 72 Washington St.

The Urbane Cyclist (bike rentals), 144 Washington St