

**case 8-400-577**  
**August 19, 2026**

Stuart L. Hart

## **Lyft and Citi Bike's Crossroads: Profitability, Sustainability, and Equity**

Nicole Jones<sup>i</sup> returned to her desk from a celebratory luncheon at Lyft's New York City offices on a Friday in May 2023. The event, commemorating the 10-year anniversary of Citi Bike as New York's official bike-sharing system, left many of her colleagues with a renewed sense of excitement, but Jones felt consumed by growing uncertainty, even though she had just been promoted to chief of staff for the Bikes and Scooters team.

For one thing, the head of the team was new in the job, and his predecessor had lasted just seven months. Lyft, which owned Citi Bike, also had just promoted a new head of strategy and growth, who was likely looking for profitable expansion. Jones would be working closely with both men, at the nexus of every next decision that could transform Citi Bike—and every challenge it would face.

And there had been another jolt, right from the top: The new CEO of Lyft, in his first week in the job, had included the company's chief sustainability officer in a round of sweeping layoffs.<sup>1,2</sup> Brought in to help Lyft compete with Uber, the CEO had given a clear signal that profit was going to be a higher priority. Also, Jones had heard that Lyft might simply sell off Citi Bike.

Jones had joined Lyft's bike division with a deep belief—and eagerness—that bike-sharing could transform cities, improve the environment, and make the world a little better. She believed that the success of Citi Bike was critical to proving that a more circular economy was possible through subscription and/or sharing models. But now she was grappling with how to manage the pressures to be profitable and equitable, while maintaining quality transportation.

There was increasing pressure from the public and from city officials to improve service in predominantly minority neighborhoods and to expand into transportation deserts<sup>ii</sup> in the outer boroughs.<sup>3,4</sup> This kind of

<sup>i</sup> Nicole Jones is a fictional character.

<sup>ii</sup> A transportation desert (or transit desert) refers to a community in which access to public transportation is limited.

---

*Published by WDI Publishing, part of the William Davidson Institute (WDI) at the University of Michigan.*

©2026 Sophie Geoghan, Andrew Johnson, Mikayla Merchant, and Rissa Prakosa. This case was written by University of Michigan graduate students Sophie Geoghan, Andrew Johnson, Mikayla Merchant, and Rissa Prakosa, under the supervision of Stuart L. Hart, Professor in Residence at the University of Michigan's Erb Institute, assisted by Joshua Phan-Gruber, 2025 MBA/MS candidate at the University of Michigan. The case was prepared as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a situation. The case should not be considered criticism or endorsement and should not be used as a source of primary data. The opening and closing situations in the case are fictional in order to provide a more robust student learning experience but otherwise it was written using publicly available sources.