



Spin around town for a dime a day

YOU'LL GET A CHARGE OUT OF ALL-WEATHER ELECTRIC BICYCLE

By Tim Jackson

ARE YOU FED UP with paying \$1.30 a litre to fill up your car? If so, you may want to look at the line of Veloteq electric bicycles (or eBikes) being sold locally by We\$ellit in Waterloo.

There are two types of electric bicycles on the market. The first type is typically referred to as "power-assist" and requires manual pedalling by the rider. The electric motor kicks in to assist with a steep hill or to provide relief on a long journey. The second type, the version sold by We\$ellit, is "power-on-demand."

These eBikes resemble mopeds and operate in a similar fashion. They have pedals, but typically the pedals are only used if the battery runs out.

The Veloteq eBikes use a rechargeable battery pack with handles that can be removed from the bike and plugged into an AC outlet in your home or office for charging. Depending on how drained the battery is, a full charge takes from two to eight hours.

A full battery will provide 50 to 80 kilometres of travel, depending on the weight of the rider and the nature of the terrain being covered. With the cost of electricity at less than 10 cents per charge, the bikes pay for themselves in gas savings in no time.

Veloteq is constantly seeking improved battery technologies, therefore expect to see upgrades available that will improve battery life and reduce charging times. At

present, the battery weighs between 35 and 63 pounds, depending on the model. The eBikes themselves, with battery in place, are 135 to 172 pounds.

We\$ellit carries three models of the Veloteq eBikes ranging in price from \$1,499 to \$1,999.

The entry-level Cougar is designed for smaller riders, whereas the Commuter and Commander models are larger in size, have additional storage compartments and offer a smoother ride, thanks to their larger tires and improved shocks. Set-up and assembly is included in the price.

Each of the models is equipped with three locks and a burglar alarm to deter theft. The units have all the safety features you would expect, including rear-view mirrors, lights, reflectors and a horn. The bikes can be operated in all weather conditions.

Like a motorcycle, acceleration is accomplished with a handlebar throttle which has



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a built-in cruise control setting. Simply hold the throttle in position for six seconds and cruise control will kick in, allowing you to relax your hands and wrists on longer journeys. Braking is similar to a bicycle, with front and rear brake controls located on the handlebars.

The units are currently being allowed in Ontario under a three-year trial (expiry date is October 2009). Under this pilot project, the vehicles are being regulated exactly the same as regular bicycles with two exceptions: you must wear an approved bicycle helmet and



FOR SMALL RIDERS
Veloteq's Cougar, the entry-level model of eBike, weighs about 135 pounds.

riders must be at least 16 years old. You do not require a driver's licence, insurance or a vehicle registration to operate an eBike.

There is, however, a trade-off for these relaxed regulations: the maximum permitted speed under the Ontario regulations is 32 km/h. Veloteq units come equipped with a governor to ensure you do not exceed this limit.

I took one of the Commander units out for a test drive and even as a first-time driver I quickly became very comfortable with the bike. Like most first-time riders, the first thing I noticed was the lack of sound from the engine. Thanks to the electric motor, you hear almost no noise and cannot even tell that the bike is "on."

Driving is intuitive, and with a maximum speed of 32 km/h it is tough to get in any real trouble. Once you get comfortable with the turning radius everything becomes easier.

While not for everyone, the eBike is a



Fun to look at and drive, the eBike is worth considering for short commutes. Riders must be at least 16 and wear a helmet. A driver's licence isn't necessary.

great alternative to a car for students, people who have a short commute to work or anyone who wants to be environmentally conscious while reducing their gas expenses. At less than 10 cents a day to operate, it is cheaper than taking the bus and a lot more fun.

To see the Veloteq eBikes up close or to take one for a test drive, visit We\$ellit at 10 Wyman Rd. in Waterloo or visit their website at www.wesellit.ca.

Tim Jackson lives in Waterloo, and can be contacted at tim@gadgetcolumn.ca

35 Sasaga Drive, Kitchener
(on the corner of Manitou)
519 894-4020
www.kitchenconceptsbymartha.com



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