

Zero Electric Motorcycle Demo Rides

The future of motorcycles...? That remains to be debated. They may not replace the 'potato-potato-potato' of a combustion engine any time soon... but they are definitely taking their place and making their mark within the motorcycling community. In 2010, Zero Motorcycles brought in a former Buell engineer to head their engineering & design teams.

Interested riders got a chance to see and ride the Zero Motorcycle over the weekend of March 7-9, 2014. The Demo event was hosted in the parking lot of Logan's Valley Motorcycles, 1440 W Main in Mesa. [Yes, the store is still on hiatus. Logan provided the space for this gathering.]

Some 90 people took advantage of this opportunity to view the bikes, ask questions, and of course RIDE a demo of this engineering milestone.

There were several models to choose from. The bikes themselves are set up more like sport bikes than cruisers. Most of them are on the tall side, to allow for the battery pack. The weight distribution and center of gravity factor in as well. There was one model that had a little lower profile & was the popular choice for some of the shorter riders. Jeff Jolin, Zero's Regional Sales Mgr, shared that they are working through some design challenges; as the bikes are taller than some people can use.

Features of each include 'twist & go' riding ~ no clutch to shift ~ instant torque, regenerative braking,

and a maintenance free powertrain. The Zero SR performance model will go from 0-60mph in 3.3 seconds. That's faster than a Ferrari.

After a pre-ride briefing from Jeff, it was time to ride... with Logan leading the way. Each demo ride was about a 5-mile loop, taking about 15 minutes. They went from Alma School to McKellips, a freeway run, then McKellips to Alma & back to the shop. This gave riders a combination of surface street and highway riding.

The range of these bikes is approximately 171 miles in town, and about half that on the highway. Retail is between \$9,500-\$19K; depending on model, battery pack, and other components which affect range and the charge time for battery recovery.

A standard 110 outlet will recharge the battery pack in about 9 hours. But at a charging station that same charge can be accomplished in about 45 minutes.

To give an example of range, the bikes in this demo event

were ridden all day long on Friday. There was no recharging during the day. On the last ride of the day, 1 bike's battery died about a block before getting back to home base.

There is an app available which ties to the pilot's Bluetooth-enabled iPhone or Android mobile device which will feed all of the bike's reading into your phone ~ making it a secondary dashboard; offering diagnostics, charge and torque details, performance profile, ride statistics, & more.

There was no question about the bike's ability to perform. The riders we spoke with were impressed.

We've been reading about electric motorcycles since they were still in the concept & test modes. It was good to see them in action on the street. One of the striking aspects is how amazingly quiet they are. This feature was made even more pronounced when a traditional motorcycle in the lot was fired up to trail the demo riders. We have no doubt that we'll be seeing & writing more about these bikes in the future.

Bruce & Betsy

