



Ahearne Cycle Truck

handlebars up high and not too far from the seat," it's obvious that some serious forethought and tinkering has gone into the geometry of the Cycle Truck. Ahearne says that he made six or seven prototypes before arriving at

a design that satisfied his needs. I could sit and spin, or stand up and jam hard, and the bike kept to its course impassively. Yet it could be scooted around obstacles easily enough. The steering was quicker than with a bigger wheel, but not overly so, and that helped to give time to maneuver the front end. The seat tube is sloped enough to allow putting a foot down easily at a stop. I had to make a couple small concessions: the 20" front wheel was more apt to fall into some of the heinous potholes we have around here, and I couldn't hop up onto curbs very easily, and not at all with a significant weight on the front. Mind you don't catch the corners of the rack in hemmed-in spaces (although mine came pre-padded with cut pieces of tire).

What impressed me most was the lack of difference between loaded and unloaded handling; the bike steered just as easily and predictably whether there was anything on the front rack or not, and with varying amounts of weight. This made riding the Cycle Truck enjoyable at all times, not some kind of cargo purgatory. It is a more casual, shorter-distance sort of bike—

my 12-mile commute pushed its comfortable range—but given a good head start by avoiding the snooze button, and no headwind, that distance was still pleasant, and even fun, to cover on this bike.

The one drawback to the frame's design is that it's not step-through. Sometimes mounting and dismounting can be tricky when you've got a large load. Ahearne has made small and medium frames with a top tube that slopes downward to give more standover clearance, but that doesn't make it a truly step-through-able bike. It's a tradeoff I feel is desirable, though, given the rock-solid stability of the frame—those twin tubes supporting the rack couldn't do their thing while also bending out of the way.

Aside from the basic structure, careful consideration shows up in the rest of the Cycle Truck's build. There are a ton of options available—check out the Ahearne website to see all the possibilities, including some to be added in the future. My tester had an 8-speed Shimano internal hub with plenty of range to haul a good load up hills and to work up a respectable pace with gravity on my side. An external derailleur is an option, but I really can't imagine wanting one, since internal gearing suits the practical nature of this bike so well. The rack was fitted with an optional Dibond Flat Panel Base, made of an aluminum composite, and also fitted with a set of nautical cleats to make tie-down easy. All complete bikes come with a wide, sturdy Ursus brand center stand, a necessity for sure, and handbuilt wheels

capable of taking cargo abuse. The Dibond base is pre-drilled for a Wald 157 Giant Delivery Basket; I used one for a little while, but preferred the Inside Line Equipment front rack bag (reviewed on page 55). The option that really shined for practicality was the Light On! DynoLight front light (also made in Oregon), paired with a Shimano generator hub, together giving an impressive max output of 450 lumens. If it were my bike, I'd opt for a rear blinky to be wired in as well. One glaring omission was a chainguard, but future versions will amend this.

This bike seemed like a perfect candidate for a ring lock, such as the Axa Defender, and Ahearne confirmed that he has outfitted a couple frames with brazed-on tabs for such a lock. (You can also install these types of locks with included straps, but braze-ons are classier.) Ahearne has also made a Cycle Truck with a belt drive, and he'd probably be willing to accommodate just about any other option you could dream up.

The Cycle Truck is one of the more expensive bikes we've tested. Is it worth it? That depends on your budget, of course. From my perspective, this is one bike that could handily replace a car, and the cost is about in line with what I'd spend on a car anyway.