

So, what are the required changes to convert Kawasaki's sports tourer into a police offering?

To begin with, the frame and triple clamps are modified to increase available steering, lock-to-lock. The transmission and speedometer are synchronized to within plus or minus two mph. Handlebar height is raised to accommodate department radio equipment. Front and rear engine guards

plant but the real features, to me, were the electronics and how they took what might have easily been a brute of a bike and created a manageable weapon.

Kawasaki's traction control system is well integrated here. Although very intrusive (you know when it hits) the system reacts to even the slightest wheel speed difference. Another plus is the ABS braking system. One word: awesome. The linked system, with 310mm

duty it's over to Ballard and his team of instructors, Don and Adrian, to ensure the officers are trained to their standards.

The training and more specifically the skill level the officers have to achieve to "graduate" thoroughly impressed me. Ballard's curriculum consists of 12 10-hour days spread over four weeks. In that time the officers, ranging in experience from seasoned street rider to novice (though prospects must already have a valid motorcycle licence) immerse themselves in a variety of skill sets that you and I will never have to contemplate. For example, they are taught to dismount on the right-hand (throttle) side. The routine is this: come to a stop, and check right-hand mirror for possible threats such as approaching vehicles. Now reach up with the left hand and grab the front brake to stabilize the bike while pulling yourself up, all while keeping the right hand clear for possible threat management ("clear" meaning quick access to firearm). For me, this protocol really drove home what an entirely different set of parameters police must contemplate while riding a motorcycle—as if they don't have enough going on. But it's the other hard skills that really bring together Ballard's vision and training.

He sees the motorcycle division as officers who perform duties far beyond the public stereotype of simple speed trap monitors. A police motorcycle is a highly visible means to get an officer into areas not easily accessed by patrol units. Areas such as large crowds, parks, trails, and densely populated urban environments.

It's with this implementation in mind that they base a large part of their hard riding skills, learned through a prescribed regimen of complex slow-speed navigational tests involving closely-spaced traffic cones. Simply put, an officer has to demonstrate complete control and confidence while navigating exceptionally tight patterns. And when I say tight, I mean tight.

Imagine turning a Road King, or any other larger motorcycle for that matter, 180 degrees within a 17-foot radius. Impressive, especially when they make it look so easy. Nor does training stop with slow speed maneuverability.

Officers are also put through "hazard avoidance" training. Here the bikes are brought up to speed—around 70 kmh—before "threshold braking" (emergency braking) is applied. The officer has to slow the bike down to walking speed and then plot a course through a series

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are attached. The sub-frame is modified for the additional weight of radio and emergency equipment. A custom wiring harness is installed, along with a secondary battery system to operate all emergency equipment.

There's the installation of a custom rear radio/equipment trunk, and saddlebags. From Corbin, there's a custom heated seat for those long, cold shifts. The fuel tank takes a modification for the secondary battery system. A (really LOUD) 100-watt siren, cruise control, modified kick stand, handlebars with emergency controls, and emergency lighting complete the specification.

I had my five-year-old son in tears within minutes of getting the bike. Which didn't bode well, I grant you. But I simply could not resist pushing all the shiny buttons. What would you do? Naturally, I managed to select the siren button with my son directly in front of the bike, exposing him to a deafening blast. Along with his hearing capacity, his enthusiasm for the bike and his father quickly diminished. I'm sure I'll pay for that some day.

Straddling the bike, my first impression was: this isn't too bad an office. Here's a very comfortable heated seat to keep your lower parts warm; heated grips to keep your hands comfortable; a huge, electrically-adjustable windscreen ... cripes this is luxury to me! And with just under 1400ccs and 155 hp propelling the 317-kg bike, acceleration isn't an issue.

What did surprise me was how smoothly the bike delivers an "electric motor" feel. Silent but with lots of torque. I could go on and on about the power-

front discs, hauls the bike to a stop with authority and confidence. That's something I know any officer, or civilian rider for that matter, would appreciate. Despite the bike's additional weight, with saddlebags and emergency equipment and so on, I came away impressed with how well it hid its mass once underway. Dare I suggest the bike felt nimble even in the tighter, twistier sections of road I frequently ride?

Ultimately, the Concours 14 carries itself exceptionally well, and has huge potential in terms of performance, which it delivers in a very usable manner. I can see why the various police departments are looking at it for possible deployment.

WHEN WE RECEIVED THE BIKE WE ALSO GOT WORD THAT THE VPD WAS evaluating the Kawasaki for its motorcycle department. This opened a channel with VPD's Sgt. Paul Ballard, who is in charge of the motorcycle division. Through him we would get the chance to experience first-hand what VPD does to train its officers for motorcycle duty, and observe the unique demands put on the bikes. Vancouver's motorcycle police division consists of 42 officers and 35 bikes. Currently the entire fleet consists of 2006-2008 Harley-Davidson Road Kings. Demand is high for placement in this department as more than 30 officers apply each year for a chance to ride the bikes. But this can only occur once an officer has at least four years of service behind them. Staying with department tradition, an officer can only stay with one posting for a maximum of five years before being transferred. So when a member is "approved" for motorcycle