International Police Mountain Bike Association
Board Position Paper – Use of Various Bicycle Types by Public Safety Cyclists – October 2017

As the leader in the field of public safety cycling, IPMBA endeavors to keep abreast of changing technologies, methodologies, and other applicable factors. This includes equipment and devices for use in training and in the field.

IPMBA comprises a diverse group of law enforcement officers, EMS personnel, and security professionals. These public safety cyclists operate their equipment under a wide range of environmental conditions, from rocky trails to urban settings, and in all kinds of weather. IPMBA teaches the skills necessary to safely operate a bicycle in a patrol capacity. As in other areas of public safety, different environments call for different apparatus; therefore, vehicle operations skills are designed to be transferrable to other, similar vehicles. As new bicycle designs continue to emerge, IPMBA has been asked to broaden the scope of bicycle styles deemed acceptable for IPMBA training and recommended for use during public safety cycling operations. This position paper was reviewed and approved by the IPMBA Board in October 2017.

Background:
Since the emergence of the mountain bike in the late 1980’s, IPMBA has taken the position that the mountain bike is the sole style of bicycle suitable for public safety use. This was necessary and appropriate at a time when there was a clear distinction between categories of bicycles (road, mountain, hybrid, cruiser), and the mountain bike was the only practical option due to its design and construction.

In the ensuing decades, new categories of bicycles have emerged and have blurred the lines of the initial distinctions. Many of these are tailored to meet specific types of riding, many of which did not exist in the 1980’s including cyclo-cross, enduro, and downhill, and possess such features as electric-assist motors and fat tires.

Those responsible for vehicle selection are urged to assess such factors as riding surface, the frequency and duration of rides, type of riding, weather, and other environmental factors. The wide range of options available enables them to select the design and technologies that best suit their area of usage.

IPMBA has long encouraged its members to remain open-minded and to experiment with new accessories and components in an effort to increase safety, comfort, and effectiveness. However, IPMBA has historically been more cautious about embracing changes to the bicycle itself.

Position:
In light of the ongoing evolution of the bicycle, IPMBA hereby authorizes participants in IPMBA training to ride any bicycle that meets their agency’s needs and that can be safely used to complete the training requirements, with the following provisions.
As noted above, those responsible for equipment selection and procurement are encouraged to conduct a needs assessment that includes such factors as operational environment, riding style, frequency, etc. They are encouraged to consult subject matter experts within the public safety and cycling industries to help ensure they make the right choices.

IPMBA Instructors are responsible for ensuring that each student is equipped with a well-maintained, properly fitted bicycle and for evaluating the safety of all bikes prior to the start of each course. These assessments are to identify obvious equipment problems that may jeopardize the safety of the operator. Instructors should refer to the IPMBA ITK for further instruction on Bike Fit (Skill Station 2) and allow time for screening and sizing student bikes in the applicable course schedule.

If a bicycle is found to be poorly constructed or maintained, ill-fitting or otherwise unsafe, it is the instructor’s responsibility to prohibit use of the bike in training. It is the student’s responsibility to heed the advice of the subject matter expert and either withdraw or locate a more suitable bike.

Instructors are not, nor should they be expected to be, experts in bicycle construction or knowledgeable about all makes and models. However, instructors are advised to familiarize themselves with different types of bicycles and their advantages, limitations, and effects on cycling skills. This will help instructors maintain confidence in their ability to teach skills to those utilizing different types of bicycles. It will also enable them to provide advice to those in the equipment selection process.

IPMBA teaches the skills needed to operate a bicycle safely within a front-line service environment. We embrace technological changes and encourage agencies to select bicycles that best suit their service environment. It remains the responsibility of the IPMBA instructor to ensure that each rider masters all skills necessary to successfully complete the training requirements so they will be able to handle their individual bicycles competently in technical, vehicular, and operational cycling situations.

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