

# Bicycle Retailer

JULY 2020

and INDUSTRY NEWS



E-bike sales spike with closure of Seattle bridge

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## STATE OF RETAIL



Mike Olson, Owner, Trek Superstore and Bike Gallery, San Diego, California

**How has COVID-19 changed your supplier relationships? How has the communication been?**

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Photo: EVA MARIE UZCATEGUI/GETTY IMAGES

## Use of police bikes creates debate within the industry

**The George Floyd protests draw criticism — and support — of departmental tactics**

By Dean Yobbi

MINNEAPOLIS — “It’s crazy with the world, with what’s happening right now.”

So says a bike retailer who received a voicemail last month about Fuji’s North American distributor suspending sales to police departments in response to reports of bikes being used as weapons and shields to control protestors.

“A lady called me one afternoon, and she thought I was Fuji bikes,” said the retailer who did not want to be identified. “She was an older woman and said, ‘I hope your shop gets broken into, and I hope all these things happen to you. I hope you have to call the police, and the police don’t come help you.’ She was

going on and on, a horrible message.”

The global Black Lives Matter protests to call attention to police reform and systemic racism sprung from the death of George Floyd in police custody by four white Minneapolis officers on May 25. Later ruled a homicide, the watershed event created a sharp divide in the nation — and the bike industry — about police use of force and the tools used to administer it.

“There’s been tons of threats going out to people, including to Fuji and other people I know,” the retailer said. “It’s gotten to the point now where if you say something pro-police, they’re coming at you, or if you do the opposite, you’re getting threats the other

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## The bike boom’s electric assist

By Steve Frothingham

SANTA CRUZ, Calif. — As the industry debates whether the pandemic-driven “mini bike boom” will end with a bust as supply dwindles, or reset as the new normal for years, consider one key difference between this boom and the early 1970s edition: This time we have e-bikes.

“We have a new asset at hand, which is the e-bike,” said Ewoud van Leeuwen, the general manager of Gazelle North America.

E-bike sales boomed along with the rest of the bike categories since the pandemic lockdowns began in the US in mid-March.

“For Gazelle, by the middle or end of March we came to a bit of a stop, but by the second week of April things started to get going again and then since then it hasn’t stopped, it’s only increased,” van Leeuwen said.

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## Calendar year product cycle set for Cannondale

By Steve Frothingham

BETHEL, Conn. — Since the start of the pandemic, pundits within the industry and in the wider world have noodled about what industry norms, altered by COVID and the bike boom, might outlast the current situation. Onshoring and diversified supply chains, for example. A renewed focus on family and transportation cycling. More omnichannel sales. Perhaps more retail by appointment.

Cannondale says this season’s disruptions inspired it to shift its entire bike product cycle, returning to an updated version of the cycle the industry relied on in decades’ past, with dealer pre-season commitments made in the fourth quarter and model transitions centered around the new year. The

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FROM THE COVER

## POLICE BIKES

way. And I mean threats to where people I know have had to call the police.”

When video surfaced in the early days of the protests of police using bikes to repel crowds, it caused Fuji distributor BikeCo and later Trek Bicycle to issue statements against these tactics. This in turn got the attention of the International Police Mountain Bike Association, a non-profit organization providing training for public safety cyclists.

“Of course, our members feel betrayed by an industry they support both on and off the job,” according to a joint statement issued to BRAIN by the IPMBA Board of Directors. “They are embittered that brands that for years have reaped financial and marketing benefits from their association with the police are now turning their backs. Comments circulating on social media indicate our members and those who support them stand ready to vote with their wallets.”

### Bikes are not the problem

The IPMBA said bike officers are being unnecessarily criticized “because of a few high-profile incidents captured in part on video or on camera. In many of the photos and videos, the bike officers are not even contacting protesters — some are even posed or staged — yet their bicycles are described as being used as weapons. In some instances, officers who happened to have been on a bike dismantled and engaged with the protesters in some other manner. If the bicycle was not used to strike a citizen, why vilify it? The actions of the officer have nothing to do with the bicycle; he or she could have just as easily been in a car, on a motorcycle, or on a horse that day.”

On June 5, BikeCo, which distributes Fuji bikes, released the statement of “beginning a dialogue with police departments nationwide to address how bikes are used in police activity and to ensure that police’s on-bike training reinforces that bicycles are not a weapon against our community.

“... To hear that there are instances where bicycles have been used as a weapon against those who are vulnerable, those speaking out against the unjust treatment of people of color, and those standing alongside them advocating change, has deeply upset our community, our company and the heart of the Fuji brand. We support many diverse organizations and athletes — not for marketing stories, but because we truly want to make a difference in our community. To have these efforts overshadowed by cases of violence with bicycles is unacceptable.”

Five days later, and several hours after publishing a blog post about its diversity programs, Trek released a statement regarding the use of its police bikes.

“Recently, we have seen photos and video of Trek bikes that have been used by police in ways that are abhorrent and vastly different from their intended use. For over 25 years, we have seen police on bikes, out of cruisers and offices, building relationships in the neighborhoods they serve. The past two weeks have turned the view of police on bikes from a community asset to a liability. A positive outcome of the recent protests is that we are starting to see real police reform being discussed at local and national levels. We believe bikes can play a positive role by continuing to

“The themes and issues aren’t just an isolated problem within Trek’s brand and company — it is an industry-wide trend,” according to a statement issued by the group to BRAIN. “Some companies are doing better than others but still are not where they need to be in order to develop a truly inclusive and diverse culture.”

The Change.org petition reads in part: “Although Trek Bikes have been the most visible in police bike brutality, we know that the bike industry on a whole is complicit in this racist system of policing. ... If the cycling industry is truly taking an

## “Companies which cease sales to police will also lose these opportunities for creating goodwill and inspiring others to ride.

— International Police Mountain Bike Association

get officers out of cars and armored trucks and into the community where trust can be built.”

BikeCo told BRAIN on June 15 it would have no further comment on its decision. BRAIN also sought comment from other brands that sell police bikes without getting a response.

“As for BikeCo, they and any other brand and/or distributor absolutely have the right to stand up for what they believe in and to act on those beliefs,” said Clint Sandusky, a retired Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Deputy who organizes e-bike workshops

oath of solidarity with Black Lives Matter, we cannot stand for police assaulting and brutalizing protesters with their bikes. We cannot stand for police stealing protesters’ bikes to trap them in situations that are unsafe due to the police’s violent reaction to protesters. ...”

“Our campaign has gained great traction from both the racing community and the family riding and commuter base,” the group said in its statement. “All kinds of consumers want to see change. It is an issue that has brought all different kinds of cyclists and non-cyclists together. They are appalled at the use of police bikes as weapons, but also appalled at the deeper, more systemic issues that undermine the belief that bikes are freedom.

### Policies continually evaluated

The IPMBA said use-of-force policies continually are evaluated on local and national levels as tactics and equipment evolve. “IPMBA does not teach officers to use bikes as weapons. ... They provide access to areas cars cannot reach, where innocent people are often preyed upon, and protect participants attending all types of crowds, including concerts and sporting events, parades and festivals, and First Amendment gatherings.”

While most of the BLM protests that the First Amendment protects were and continue to be peaceful, looting of bike shops did take place soon after Floyd’s death in some cities. One, I. Martin Bicycles in Los Angeles, suffered about \$130,000 in inventory loss. Two other shops — Bicycle Therapy in Philadelphia and Paradise Garage in Columbus, Ohio — experienced looting but nevertheless pledged support of Black Lives Matter in social media posts.

According to Scott Chapin, a bicycle industry risk specialist with Marsh & McLennan Agency in Minneapolis, 60% of the claims were for theft, the rest for vandalism. “A few of our shops basically lost their entire inventory,” said Chapin, who noted Minneapolis was hit hard and claims were spread across about 10 states. “I have seen countless claims in the past 12 years. The most frequent were theft claims. The most severe are liability claims — product liability. But I have never had to deal with national civil commotion which caused multiple claims in the same small time period.”

Chapin said going forward, retailers need to be proactive with a plan to deal with these outbreaks. He recommends moving property to a safer location or placed in a less accessible part of the building. And boarding windows is more important than even having an alarm system.

“Especially since the police are probably not going to show up right away if they are preoccupied with protesters,” Chapin said.

Floyd was arrested after allegedly making a purchase with counterfeit money. During the arrest, three officers held him prone on the pavement handcuffed, while a third, Derek Chauvin, pressed his knee on Floyd’s neck for almost nine minutes. Chauvin was charged with second-degree murder and the others with aiding and abetting second-degree murder.

“I was very saddened and upset at the brutal death of George Floyd, as all Americans and good law enforcement personnel were,” Sandusky said. “Is police brutality and other injustices in society an issue? Yes! And it needs to be addressed and eliminated. However, based on my 24 years in law enforcement — 23 as a bike cop — and continuing teaching for 25-plus years in Southern California, I never saw what is called “systemic racism” and/or police brutality.”

Defund Bike Police disagrees.

“The issues coming up within the cycling community serve as a reflection of the conversations that are currently happening around the systemic and institutional racism that our country was built upon. We are not the only organization working toward change within our industry nor are we the only organization working to change various industries as a whole. Our campaign is a call to other people and companies to step up to the plate and address these issues head on.”

And as for the curtailing of bike sales to police departments, IPMBA said that would hurt all involved.

“Companies which cease sales to police will also lose these opportunities for creating goodwill and inspiring others to ride. And there are far more of those than there are incidents like the ones that have just occurred. ... We continue to believe that bicycles break down barriers and will play an important role in the healing process.” **BRAIN**



Trek police bikes were at the forefront of complaints of crowd-control tactics during BLM protests.

for IPMBA. “That is the beauty of our free country and system of capitalism. And as a free market, there’s other wonderful brands out there to choose from.”

### Petition started

If the creators of a website have their way, those options will be limited. The Defund Bike Police website ([www.defundbikepolice.com](http://www.defundbikepolice.com)), created by a collective of cyclists hoping to create change in the industry’s culture, links to a petition calling for Trek and the bike industry as a whole to stop selling to police departments and invest more in diversity. Nearly 6,600 people signed as of June 21, with the goal of 7,500.