Finally, an e-bike that charges off USB-C

Ampler made one of the first modern e-bikes I ever tested, and now it’s selling the first commercial electric bikes — the Nova and Nova Pro — I’m aware of that can be charged over a USB-C port integrated right into the frame. Hell, that same jack will even charge your gadgets in a pinch, but not in the US because this e-bike is for Europe only.

Estonia-based Ampler is best known for making reliable direct-to-consumer e-bikes from its home in Tallinn using decent, mostly off-the-shelf parts that can be serviced at any local bike shop. Adding USB-C charging from a laptop charger you might already own makes a ton of sense as Europe standardizes on the port to eliminate redundancy and reduce waste. It also makes it easier to find a compatible bike charger if you leave yours at home.

You can charge the relatively small 48V 336Wh integrated batteries (removable for service only) on the Nova series e-bikes from zero to full in as little as three hours from a USB-C PD 3.1 charger operating at up to 140W. That’s very respectable. Some e-bikes fitted with a battery this same size can take five hours or longer to refill from chargers with proprietary connectors, and others fitted with larger batteries and 300-plus-watt charging bricks can bring that down to around two hours. Fortunately, 240W USB-C chargers are now starting to ship, so USB-C is well in position to compete.

Ampler has also tested its bikes to work with less capable Ikea and MacBook chargers that support the older USB-C PD 3.0 spec. If you don’t already have such a charger, Ampler will sell you its own 140W USB-C PD 3.1 charger for €80 (about

$87). And while the USB-C port is bidirectional on the Nova series, it’s only capable of charging your USB-C gadgets at a modest 15W.

Both the €2,990 (about $3,230) Nova and €3,490 (about $3,770) Nova Pro are available in step-through and step-over frames in three sizes to accommodate most riders, with EU standard 250W motors maxing out at a basic 25km/h. They’re essentially improved Stout and Stella models designed to be more compatible with accessories like U-locks, third-party saddles, and child carriers. The base Nova model is fitted with wide 27.5-inch tires and depends on an oily chain and derailleur for its nine-speed transmission. The Nova Pro, however, is the bike I’d opt for, with its slightly larger 28-inch wheels, Gates Carbon belt drive, and a 10-speed Shimano Deore drivetrain baked into the hub.

Both the Nova and Nova Pro are available to preorder starting today in the UK, EU, and Switzerland, with shipping set to begin in June. Ampler is backed by official service centers in Germany and a network of “Ampler Friendly” workshops scattered around Europe. Each bike comes with a two-year warranty and a 14-day return policy.

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