VanMoof’s new V e-bike is its fastest ever

VanMoof just announced the VanMoof V, the company’s first high-speed electric bike capable of hitting a top speed of 60km/h (37mph). That’s much faster than VanMoof’s current e-bikes, which are capped at 25km/h in Europe and 20mph in the US, and well beyond what local laws currently allow.

Vanmoof is launching the pedal-assisted V today as a challenge to lawmakers and city planners to rethink outmoded regulations and start putting the needs of people ahead of cars.

The V’s chiseled design still delivers the oft-imitated VanMoof aesthetic, only now it’s applied to a muscular e-bike fitted with motors in both the front and rear wheel hubs and powered by a hulking 700Wh battery. This allows for longer rides that are softened by oversized tires and a front and rear suspension attached to a “robust” aluminum frame. It also features signature VanMoof touches like a Turbo Boost button, automatic shifting, and a keyless kick lock among the anti-theft and recovery tech we’re used to seeing on the company’s e-bikes.

And just like VanMoof’s regular commuter e-bikes, there’s no throttle on the pedal-assisted V, and the battery can’t be removed for charging. It will, however, be offered with a PowerBank range extender option.

The VanMoof V will initially be sold in the Netherlands, Germany, France, the UK, the US, and Japan for $3,498/€3,498/£3,498. That’s not cheap until you compare it with the price of a car that these sturdy electric commuter bikes can replace. It also undercuts category darling Stromer, whose fast European e-bikes start at about €4,500 and run over €10k, and offers a more sophisticated alternative to US brands

like Super73, Juiced, and RadPower.

We’re not seeing much in the way of detailed specs being announced today. That’s because the VanMoof V is still in development, with first deliveries not planned until “late 2022.” And in true VanMoof fashion, I’m told that all the new components are being developed in-house. Nevertheless, current VanMoof owners can get in line now by reserving their VanMoof V for $20/€20/£20 a pop. Reservation codes will be shared with the general public “periodically” via a waitlist.

Rear suspension.

Front suspension.

Front light.

Tail light.

The VanMoof V is faster than both Europe’s 45km/h limit for so-called speed pedelecs and the 28mph limit for Class 3 e-bikes in the US. Although VanMoof says the bikes will include integrated speed settings tuned to each country’s regulations, it’s using the launch to plead with lawmakers, particularly in Europe, to “urgently update e-bike regulations” that are stifling the development and adoption of fast e-bikes as car replacements, and thus slowing progress towards a more sustainable future.

“During the development of the VanMoof V, VanMoof intends to work with city governments to explore solutions from geofencing to revised speed regulations,” the company says in

a press release.

As I said in my review of the Stromer ST2 speed pedelec, US cities have all of the fast e-bikes and no bicycle infrastructure, whereas European cities have all of the protective infrastructure and few fast e-bikes. Nevertheless, riding a Class 3 e-bike in the US typically requires nothing more than a helmet. European laws also require owners of s-pedelecs to obtain liability insurance and registration. They must also hold a moped-class driver's license because current rules were implemented long before the advent of the modern e-bike.

European rules also force fast e-bikes onto roads, where vulnerable cyclists must ride next to speeding taxis, dangerous trucks, and aggressive BMWs instead of alongside other bicyclists on protected bike lanes. Call me crazy, but if European lawmakers can let Ferraris drive on city roads before turning them loose on the autobahn, you'd think they could do the same for fast e-bikes on *speed-enforced* bike lanes.

Speed limits could be enforced through the same mechanisms that govern cars already, or via geofencing, as VanMoof suggests. Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) systems will be mandatory in new European cars starting in 2022, and several studies are underway to see how the speed limiting technology (which can be overridden by the operator) can be applied to speed pedelecs.

BMW already has a geofencing solution deployed in many European cities to automatically switch its newer plug-in hybrid cars to an all-electric driving mode when entering low emission zones. Last month, it proposed a series of high-speed e-bikes that would employ geofencing to allow them to act like motorcycles outside the city and bicycles within while noting that the legal framework to develop such e-bikes doesn't exist. The message was clear: introduce modern legislation

that reflects the realities of lightweight electric vehicle transportation, and BMW will make its e-bike concepts real.

Profile.
VanMoof is flipping the BMW script by announcing sales of its fast e-bike first. Such a move could result in a groundswell of support to prompt legislative action. VanMoof needs cities to change if it’s to make owning an e-bike compelling enough for the company to sell 10 million electric bikes in the next five years – well above the roughly 200,000 it has shipped since the company was founded over a decade ago.

To achieve that goal while keeping its riders safe, VanMoof needs cities to take the rules and infrastructure designed for cars and holistically adapt them to the new realities of urban commutes done by electric skateboard, scooter, and e-bike. Else, they risk the chaos seen in Paris and other cities that have tried to adapt piecemeal to the electric bike boom accelerated by the pandemic.

“We’re calling for policies designed around people, rethinking how public spaces can be used if not occupied by cars,” says VanMoof co-founder Ties Carlier in a statement.

Changes of this magnitude would go a long way in helping cities achieve their environmental goals, but they won’t happen overnight. VanMoof’s home of Amsterdam took decades to become the bicycle capital of the world. With the launch of the VanMoof V, VanMoof is trying to get the conversation started. If not now, when?

https://www.theverge.com/22722099/vanmoof-v-electric-bike-price-specs-date-preorder