



XTRACYCLE EDGERUNNER

BY MATT WEIBE

→ I'M A CARGO BIKE evangelist and positively effusive about long-tail cargo bikes. I cannot pass a person stuffing groceries into too-small panniers, or some parent buckling a poor child into a trailer, without thinking how much better life would be with one of these.

Cargo bikes are the pickup trucks of the bike world. You can set out not knowing what the day will bring, but whatever you encounter you can stuff it in, strap it on, and bring it all home.

Long-tails like the Kona Ute, Madsen Kg271, Trek Transport, Yuba Boda Boda and El Mundo, or Xtracycle's various models are perfect city bikes for families, even single folk will like their "Get 'er done" attitude.

I tested the bike on the paved and dirt streets of Santa Fe, New Mexico, as well as a few singletrack trails around town. I'm a little over 260 pounds, with just the slightest bit of food in my mustache, and 6'2" with a 35-inch inseam.

My 50-pound daughter, 10 to 30

SPECIFICATIONS

EDGERUNNER 27DLUX FREIGHT

Price: EdgeRunner Electric 27DLux Freight \$5,399. Entry-level EdgeRunner 24D Family \$1,990, Bionx electric assist package \$2,100. Frameset, including racks, deck, headset and seatclamp, \$1,099

Sizes available: S/M (16.5 in.), M/L (19 in.)

Size tested: M/L

Weight: 68 lbs. (51 lbs. without e-assist)

TEST BIKE MEASUREMENTS

1. Seat tube: 19 in. (center to top)

2. Top tube: 24.24 in. (virtual); 23.25 in. (actual)

3. Head tube angle: 73°

4. Seat tube angle: 72.5°

5. Chainstays: 32 in.

6. Bottom bracket drop: 63mm

7. Crank spindle height above ground: 11.25 in.

8. Fork offset: 60mm

9. Wheelbase: 57 in.

10. Standover height: 27 inches

11. Frame: Chromoly, bosses for one water bottle cage. There on no eyelets on the dropout, a mid-fork leg braze-on (Low-rider mount) is used for the front fender, and a custom braze-on is used to mount the rear fender. There are brake and shift housing braze-ons, but electrical control wires are Zip-Tied on.

12. Fork: Chromoly, 1 1/8-in. steerer; mid-leg fender mount, no dropout eyelet, post-disc mount. Light and fender mount to fork crown.

13. Rims: Front Alex DM-300 26-inch 32-hole, Rear BionX CR35 20-inch (ETERO 406 X 18) 36-hole



- 14. Spokes:** 14G stainless
- 15. Hubs:** Front BioLogic Joule 3, Rear BionX hub motor
- 16. Tires:** Schwalbe Big Ben, front 26 X 2.35, rear 20 X 2.15
- 17. Bottom bracket:** Deore Hollowtech II
- 18. Crankset:** Shimano Deore 9s 170mm, 48/36/26 chainrings
- 19. Cassette:** Shimano Deore 9-speed, 11-13-15-17-20-23-26-30-34
- 20. Chain:** KMC X9RB 9-speed
- 21. Brake levers:** Shimano Deore Hydraulic
- 22. Shift levers:** Shimano Deore, 9-speed
- 23. Front derailleur:** Shimano Deore Mega 9 triple
- 24. Rear derailleur:** Shimano Deore

- 25. Brakes:** Shimano Deore disc, front 180mm, rear 160mm rotors
- 26. Pedals:** Alloy, Chromoly Axle
- 27. Seat post:** Alloy, 31.6mm x 400mm
- 28. Stem:** Alloy 95mm ext, 31.8mm clamp
- 29. Handlebar:** Alloy 25.5" wide, 85mm of sweep
- 30. Bar grips:** Ergon GP1
- 31. Headset:** FSA Pig DH Pro
- 32. Saddle:** WTB Speed V
- 33. Racks:** EdgeRunner rack and deck, X2 Cargo Bike Bags, U-Tube foot supports, Kickback center-stand.
- 34. Lights:** Busch & Müller Luxos
- 28. Saddle:** Velo
- 29. Fenders:** Stainless steel, full coverage

GEARING IN INCHES:

	48	36	26
11	87.3	65.5	47.3
13	73.8	55.4	40.0
15	64.0	48.0	34.7
17	56.5	42.4	30.6
20	48.0	36.0	26.0
23	41.7	31.3	22.6
26	36.9	27.7	20.0
30	32.0	24.0	17.3
34	28.2	21.2	15.3

Contact: Xtracycle, 868 43rd Street, Oakland, CA, 94608. Xtracycle.com/contact.



pounds of groceries, and mail is my usual cargo. Most trips were less than seven miles, though I did take a few 30-mile jaunts.

Xtracycle launched the long-tail cargo category 15 years ago with its Freeradical, a long-tail retrofit sub-frame that plugs into the back of any bike to extend its wheelbase and cargo capabilities.

EdgeRunner, the company's second long-tail, is designed in partnership with Naked Cycle's founder Sam Whittingham, who is a winner of numerous design awards from the North American Handmade Bike Show (NAHBS, handmadebicycleshow.com) and has built a few cargo bikes that use the Xtracycle long-tail system accessories.

Whittingham designed the Edgerunner around a 20-inch rear-wheel to keep cargo low, improve handling, and give kids an easier climb into the seat. All big improvements over Xtracycle's first bike, Radish, which used 26-inch front and rear wheels.

"When we started out, cargo bikes were a man's thing, like Surley's Big Dummy. Made for getting big stuff around," said Nate Byerley, Xtracycle's chief operating officer. "But women and families are by far our largest market now. So it made sense to lower the racks and bags so they could be loaded easier, and the 20-inch wheel does all that and more."

The smaller rear wheel allows lower cargo-friendly gearing with standard parts and proves a perfect partner to an electric-hub motor, increasing its torque drive compared to larger wheels.

The test bike is a second-generation EdgeRunner, much better than the first generation EdgeRunner I own. The frame feels stiffer, as does the fork, and it handles better all around. Out-of-saddle pedaling is surprisingly stiff at the bottom bracket. And both EdgeRunners are a huge improvement over the Radish I owned previously.

Cargo bikes are not equal

I lived car-free for seven years. The four medium panniers that saw me through weeks of touring were too small for a week's worth of shopping — and the laundry, forget about it.

When my wife and I had kids, I figured I needed a bike trailer like I had seen other families use.

But I found trailers too easy to jackknife on icy streets and catch on parking meters. Plus, all the grit and water roosted by the rear tire lands right on your child's face, leaving them looking like a Paris-Roubaix finisher on a wet year.

Cargo-forward bikes, those that carry kids or cargo between the rider and the front wheel, put so much weight up front when loaded that it's very difficult to bump it up a curb onto a sidewalk.

Long-tail cargo bikes are different beasts entirely and ride just like you expect a regular-length bike to. They are easy to ride up curbs, even with kids and cargo on the back. And like a tandem stoker, your child is right up behind you where drivers see them, and they are easy to talk with.

Electric really is better

Like most riders, I pooh-poohed e-bikes. But, like most riders, I also do not ride my bike as much as I should to do errands (It's too much work! I'll get too sweaty! It'll take too long!). But I started to wonder if I would use my EdgeRunner more if it had electric assist? This review bike was my own personal behavioral-modification experiment.

Xtracycle supplied a BionX pedal-assist hub motor, battery/controller, and handlebar computer. It took my eight-year-old daughter a little over an hour to install.

Mid-drive electric assist systems, like those from Bosch and Shimano, are located within an enlarged bottom bracket area and add power to the crankset, and so tap the bike's gears to power the rear wheel.

For cargo bikes carrying big loads, being able to multiply electric assist in the low gears is a big advantage. The down side is added cost in having to build special frames to use the systems and added drivetrain wear.

Hub motor systems like the BionX on the EdgeRunner add power after the gears, and so do not increase the load on a bike's drive train, and, arguably, lessen it.

Pedal assist works just like it sounds.

When the drivetrain senses you are pedaling, it will assist your efforts. Pedal harder and it will provide even more assistance. To a rider, an electrified EdgeRunner (e-EdgeRunner) is not much different from the unpowered version, except you go noticeably faster.

As it turns out, I did ride the e-EdgeRunner more. I get around town so fast that there were days I chose it instead of the car, even though I was tight on time.

I frankly don't remember sweating any hills on the e-EdgeRunner, even when heavily loaded. On my regular bike, I hate pushing that case of wine, or 50-pound sack of potting soil, up the hill to our home.

I read somewhere that Kona co-founder Jacob Heilbron is still surprised at how fast running errands on his e-powered Kona Ute is, and I agree. The same trip on the e-EdgeRunner cuts my time by a third and the longer the trip, the more time I save. It's not just that your top speed is faster — it is — but e-power gets you up to speed so quickly.

The largest load I carried for this test was a little over 120 pounds of kid and cargo, in addition to my not-insignificant 260 pounds. Over my hilly errand runs BionX's ability to move the load seamlessly along left little difference between loaded and unloaded riding, what more could I want?

Specs and accessories

The EdgeRunner I own is a S/M size and I don't find it noticeably different from M/L of the review bike. My five-foot-two, 13-year-old son fits both frame sizes easily, and a slightly smaller person could fit on either bike. The top tube is so much lower than the seat clamp that there is not as much difference between sizes as one would think.

The X2 Bags that came with the review bike are designed to carry large, unusually shaped objects and are not my favorite. For running errands, Xtracycle's X1 Bags are better. They have fewer straps to get in the way and the bags sit better in the pannier.

I also did not like the achilles-tendon-catcher they call U-Tube. It's an aluminum extension that fits below

the panniers so kids can step up to ride. U-Tubes are wider than the pedals so they also snag other objects and kids have no difficulty climbing on without them.

Oversized 31.6 mm seatposts like the one that came on the review bike are like riding an I-beam. Granted, at 260 pounds I do not expect a lot of compliance from a seatpost, but when I swapped in a 27.2 mm post and adapter, the comfort came right back. And the KickBack center stand is a necessary buy. Its stability makes loading easy.

Consider a larger 205 mm front disc rotor, especially on the e-EdgeRunner because of its higher speed. With two kids on back, groceries, and myself cruising at 19 MPH, it takes a bit of distance to stop the combined 350-plus-pound load.

A quick look at the gear chart makes it clear stock gearing is too low. Even without electric assist, I never used the granny gear to climb hills, no matter how heavily loaded. As a matter of fact, I was rarely out of the big ring. The company needs to tune its gear range to best take advantage of the smaller 20-inch rear wheel.

The BioLogic dynamo and Busch & Müller Luxos lighting was flawless. Those powerful lights came in handy when the EdgeRunner was electrified because of its greater speed.

Many aspects of EdgeRunner are unique — its 20-inch rear wheel and access to Xtracycle's huge range of accessories — so talking about comparative value is difficult. Of EdgeRunner's competition, Yuba's Mundo 21 Speed LUX is its closest match at \$1,499, but to the \$1,990 EdgeRunner 24D Family. While the Mundo includes fenders, lights, and a dynamo hub and is cheaper compared to the 24D family, it does not include a pair of Yuba's \$260 Go-Getter bags.

The EdgeRunner 24D Family includes a pair of Xtracycles X1 bags and Hooptie kid's carrier and so the gap with Yuba narrows. But that 20-inch rear wheel adds so much value to EdgeRunner it clinches the deal for me. **AG**

Matt Wiebe has written for Bicycle Retailer & Industry News since it started in 1991, and for various other cycling publications.