

**PRIORITY 600****Price:** \$2,199**Sizes available:** M, L, XL**Size tested:** L**Weight:** 31.2 lbs. (with pedals)**TEST BIKE MEASUREMENTS**

- **Stack:** 605mm
- **Reach:** 391mm
- **Head tube length:** 165mm
- **Head tube angle:** 69°
- **Seat tube:** 483mm (center to top)
- **Seat tube angle:** 74°
- **Top tube:** 567mm (effective)
- **Chainstays:** 445mm
- **Bottom bracket drop:** 70mm
- **Bottom bracket height:** 267mm
- **Fork Offset:** 35mm
- **Wheelbase:** 1073mm
- **Standover height:** 762mm

**SPECIFICATIONS**

- **Frame:** 6061 T6 Aluminum, rack and fender mounts
- **Fork:** 6061 T6 Aluminum, fender mounts, low-rider mounts
- **Handlebar:** Priority Alloy, 630mm, 6°
- **Stem:** Priority Alloy, 90mm
- **Brake levers:** Tektro HD-M285 hydraulic
- **Shifter:** Pinion
- **Brake calipers:** Tektro HD-M285 hydraulic
- **Rotors:** Tektro, 160mm
- **Crankset:** Pinion, 175mm, 32T Gates CDX SL Sprocket
- **Rear Cog:** 28T Gates CDX SL
- **Belt:** Gates Carbon Drive

# PRIORITY 600

BY ALEX STRICKLAND

→ Here are some things I know about bicycles: they have two wheels, pedals, a chain, at least one derailleur, and — generally speaking — I know how they work.

Here is a thing I know about bicycles now: I might actually *not* know how they work.

An injury last fall threw a wrench in my evaluation plans — doctor's orders and all that — but after the longest bikeless stretch of my adult life, I started my rehab rides on the 600 from startup New York brand Priority.

First of all, Priority bills the 600 — so named for the bike's Pinion gearbox and the 600 percent gear range packed inside — as an all road-style rig built for commutes and beyond with 650b x 47mm tires, a dynamo hub, lights, and fenders from the factory, and rack mounts front and rear.

## PULLING THE PINION

The 600 costs a not-inconsiderable \$2,200 shipped to your door in a box, or with included “white-glove” assembly courtesy of mobile bike shop Velofix, should your area have a franchise. When we first saw the 600 online, we assumed the price must be some sort of typo or limited “preorder” promotion. Pinion gearbox-equipped bikes tend to occupy Rohloff-esque real estate with retail pricing often beginning with “3” and climbing steeply from there. And combined with name-brand parts in



- **Bottom bracket:** Pinion
- **Seatpost:** Priority Alloy, 27.2mm
- **Saddle:** WTB Pure
- **Headset:** Neco Alloy
- **Hubs:** Priority Low Drag Dynamo front, Priority Performance Alloy rear, QR
- **Rims:** WTB ST TCS 2.0, 32h
- **Tires:** WTB Horizon, 650b x 47mm, tubeless ready
- **Front light:** Priority, 500 lumens
- **Rear light:** Priority fixed
- **Fenders:** Priority aluminum and plastic
- **Pedals:** Priority alloy platform, sealed bearing
- **Gear Inches:** 104.3, 88.4, 75.2, 64.2, 54.3, 45.9, 39.1, 33.3, 28.2, 23.9, 20.3, 17.4

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some usual cost-cutting corners like tires and saddle, the math doesn't quite add up.

It's the C1.12 gearbox from Pinion that makes this bike worth a look at any price, and so that's where the bulk of this review will focus. Technical Editor Nick Legan reviewed a gearbox-equipped Tout Terrain in the February 2017 issue, and with the German brand showing up on more bikes all the time, we expect to see more of them in our evaluations. The C1.12 is the lighter, more compact version available from Pinion and offers 12 gears in even 17.7 percent steps across a 600 percent range. The brand does offer an 18-speed version in its more robust (and more expensive) P-Line, though it's 600 grams heavier to gain an extra 36 percent range in considerably closer 11.5 percent steps.

I'd ridden gearbox bikes at various demos and have owned an internal gear hub commuter for years, so I was aware how sensitive nonderailer drivetrains are to pressure on the drivetrain during a shift. Pinions in particular had made an impression with their sensitivity to load on the pedals — my experience had indicated that you truly needed to be at zero watts for a shift to take.

After a few months on the 600, my opinion hasn't changed much. The gearbox — especially between certain gears — simply *will not* shift if you're putting down any power. What has changed, however, is years of derailer-induced muscle memory. Where at first letting off the gas felt awkward when accelerating from a stoplight, it now feels second nature. Ditto the move back to a Gripshift-style shifter, which I hadn't used in nearly 20 years but quickly became automatic.

The 600 also features a belt drive from Gates to offer a corrosion-resistant

and pant-leg-friendly package. I love — I cannot overstate this, I really love — this combo for ease of hopping aboard and riding away without a second thought about chain lube, ankle straps, winter road salt, and the rest of it. But while I didn't notice any kind of noodly feeling in the power transfer, when I later hopped on my regular chain-driven commuter, I felt like a fully 'roided-out roadie when the bike darn near leapt ahead. The numbers don't lie — Gates and Pinion can demonstrate that there's no more drag or stretch in their systems than a "traditional" system, but I went back and forth and my proverbial "butt dyno" returned the same result every time. The derailleur/chain bikes just felt snappier.

And while Pinion assures that their system, which sits in an oil bath, is unaffected by cold temps, on plenty of frosty Montana mornings (low double digits, but veering lower occasionally), the shifter felt decidedly sluggish until things got going. Far from a deal-breaker, but worth mentioning.

So is the gearbox worth it? Yeah, I

think it is ... for the right applications. If you commute on your touring bike, the maintenance intervals (10,000 kilometers or annually), lack of grease, and seeming weather-proofness make it an appealing option, even if it does cost twice as much as a Fuji Touring.

### GOING BEYOND THE GEARBOX

The Pinion is the 600's party piece, but there's plenty more going on. A house-brand dynamo hub spins up front and powers Priority-made front and rear lights, the latter of which is wired discreetly through the included fender. After a setup snafu with the front light, the dynamo system worked flawlessly and I immediately appreciated the inclusion from the factory. Full-coverage metal fenders were also a nice accessory and one less thing to think about fitting aftermarket. I find WTB saddles generally comfortable and the Pure model was no exception.

And while I love the slick WTB Horizon tires spec'd on the 600, I quickly swapped them for a set of

knobby WTB Senderos in the same size for a little extra purchase on Montana's poorly maintained winter roads.

Forward motion was taken care of by Pinion's crankarms and the aforementioned Gates belt. The low bottom bracket combined with 175mm crankarms and large platform pedals does make for a pedal-strike-prone combo, and a low inside foot on a turn will result in a big hit, but as with the shifting, I quickly adjusted to accommodate. Still, despite having a soft spot for absurdly low-BB'd mountain bikes, I smacked the pedals enough to leave an impression. Stopping came courtesy of Tektro HD-M285 hydraulic discs. I'm totally sold on hydros (see page 22), and the Tektros had great power and feel.

With all the brand names, you may be wondering how Priority was able to keep the price down, and you're not alone. Stem, bar, and seatpost are unfussy house brand affairs, as are the alloy platform pedals, which I found to be excellent and on par with many flashier names. Wheels are WTB i29

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rims laced to Priority hubs, with the rear offering some of the only sound on an otherwise stealthy bike — something I appreciate when coasting in a pedestrian-filled downtown.

If the bike has any obvious nod to budget constraints, it's the frame. A 6061 alloy tubeset with entirely adequate welds, an appreciated tall headtube, and black paint with reflective accents to aid in visibility on an otherwise understated rig, it's ... fine. I tested a large, though at 5'11" I was right on the border with a medium according to Priority's sizing chart. I found the large to be a good fit, but a medium would've been way too cramped thanks to a short cockpit across all sizes. And indeed there are only three to choose from, so riders on the shorter or taller end of the spectrum might find themselves out of luck.

Riding position is very upright, and the flat bars offer limited hand positioning, but that can be a feature or a bug depending on your preference.

### FINAL THOUGHTS

The 600's price and the Pinion gearbox felt so dissonant to me that I was constantly on the lookout for a fatal flaw, some corner that was cut too sharply, leaving you with a fancy German gearbox and little more. And there may well be one lurking somewhere that a Montana winter and a surgery-shortened evaluation couldn't uncover, but I've yet to find it.

Two grand is a lot for a commuter — quite possibly too much — but for a rider who prefers the upright position of a hybrid and isn't looking to carry the kitchen sink, the 600 could take you light touring all weekend and pull up next to a Porsche on the way to work Wednesday looking every bit like the distant cousins they are. And you never have to lube the chain. **AC**

*Alex Strickland is the Editor-in-Chief of Adventure Cyclist.*

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