

Car or motorcycle, hybrid gets stares and 47 mpg

By Leanne M. Robicheau, Of the NEWS Staff

ROCKLAND — Gary Dwinal sometimes feels he's in the Indianapolis 500 when he drives to work each day from Lisbon to Rockland.

It's not that he's breaking any speed records, although he probably could. It's the vehicle that he finished building last week. Dwinal's ride to work, constructed from a kit, transformed his Kawasaki ZRX 1100 motorcycle into something that is turning heads all over town and around the state.

Is it a motorcycle or a car?

"It's an IndyCycle," Dwinal said. It's legally a motorcycle, requiring a motorcycle license and registration, he said. But "when you're sitting in it and driving it, you feel like you're in a real Indy car," he said.

Dwinal, who has worked for Fisher Engineering for 12 years, has been making the 140-mile daily commute for the past eight years. The product manager for Fisher just finished building the half motorcycle, half car a week ago and has since been cruising all around the state.

Dwinal found the IndyCycle kit at a kit car show in Carlisle, Pa. He had been looking for a three-wheeler to cut his commuting costs, and when he saw the IndyCycle, he ordered it on the spot.

The design is brand-new, he said, noting that he has one of the first 10 built by Sport Vehicles LLC of Imlay, Mich.

So far, he gets 47 miles per gallon on his 140-mile commute, but he has no doubt that it would do even better if he stopped "some horsing around."

How fast is his IndyCycle?

"Faster than I have found out about yet," he said. "It will go faster than I'll ever turn it." It can cruise at typical highway speeds. But it can't be covered easily, so rainy and snowy days could prove wet rides.

Building vehicles is not new to Dwinal.

He has started to put together a Lamborghini Diablo, an exotic sports car. And while that one is 80 percent completed, he has just finished a three-month project, building a 2001 Hummer, a military-style vehicle that looks like a squashed, oversized Jeep.

Dwinal had been taking the Hummer to work but was getting a draining 14 miles per gallon.

The IndyCycle kit costs \$6,000 and can be adapted to just about any motorcycle, he said. His Kawasaki ZRX is considered a "super bike" because of its power. The bike cost \$7,000, he said, which, combined with the price of the kit, is "not bad for something that will beat Corvettes any day of the week."

In putting the kit together, the whole front fork and wheel assembly of the motorcycle is taken off and the motorcycle is bolted into the race car chassis.

When completed, the vehicle has a radius rod-type suspension with inboard springs and shocks. Both side pods on the vehicle pick up air and reroute it into the radiator for engine cooling. The IndyCycle is equipped with hydraulic disc brakes, front and rear, and hydraulic clutch and throttle pedals.

The paddle-type 5-speed shifter near the steering wheel allows the operator to keep hands on the wheel while shifting, he said.

It took Dwinal three evenings to put the IndyCycle together. Dismantling the thing would not be quite so easy, he said, because of the amount of wiring required. The modified bike has three hood pins or clips and one electrical plug, making it pretty simple to remove the body for tinkering.

But what's really neat about the IndyCycle is all the questions and the crowds, he said.

Whether he is stopped at a traffic light or stopped alongside the road, people take notice. When he parks the vehicle and returns, there is always a group standing next to it, checking it out.

"It's fascinating," Dwinal said.