

The Vision Zipper & Poncho

In an area like the Pacific Northwest, rain is a way of life....

Story & photos by Terry Parker

In an area like the Pacific Northwest, rain is a way of life—especially on the wet, western side of the Cascade Mountains. I was used to the moist conditions at least I thought I was until last year. During the 1999 Seattle-to-Portland Ride, all of the riders received a torrential baptism on the second day of the event. That day was one of the “sit-up-your-a**es” kind of downpours. Recumbent riders, because of their generally lower profile, suffer more in wet

spots than still wanted to plug me. I made the bag out of an old mountain bike inner tube attached with judicious and tasteful use of some black duct tape.

Next, I purchased a fairsing from Vision. On my bike with its configurations, the fairsing provided me with warm legs and dry feet even in the most vicious deluges. All the claims about aerodynamic advantages of the fairsing appear to be true, but the com-



good rain jacket or pants, something else might be required.

My continued search led me to try the Vision Rain Poncho. This bright yellow, coated nylon poncho is made to work with the Vision fairsing. It attaches to the fairsing with black nylon webbing straps at two points. One strap extends over the leading edge of the fairsing and snaps on to its supporting framework. A snap and buckle system also holds the poncho over the rear third of the fairsing. Both of these attachments are

flowing through the zipper. The zipper, incidentally, is accessible before to allow for adjustment while riding and for easy entry and exit while stopped.

So, how does it work? I've had lots of opportunities to use the poncho during the monsoons of the last several months, and I find it convenient and practical. It makes the weather in the bag problem, it keeps my hands dry and warm, and it's easy to take on and off. My poncho is subjected to provide enough freedom on



group rides. We get the rain from above, but we also sit in the spray zone from other bikes. I ride my Vision R-4L LAW ASS on that STP I had all the requisite rain gear, but I needed more as well in search of better protection—except for a drive role.

The first addition to my bike was fenders front and back. This kept me from being pelted by my own spray. My front wheel is a 16", and I found I needed a little rain and mud flap extending from the back of that front fender to block the pesky

fort in the cold and rain turned out to be the fairsing's strongest selling point for me.

When I ride in the rain, I almost always have my “wingap on except when I'm caught by surprise or when my ride is short enough to not care about the weather. Down with the fairsing and the fenders, I did notice that water pooled in my lap and that my gloves would get soaked quickly. If you've got good mitts, the inconvenience of having a lake in your laps is no big deal, but if you lack any—where or if you are caught without a



secure and easy to connect. Tensioning buckles on the straps allow you to customize the fit for you and your bike. The poncho fits over your head and drapes over your shoulders. The rear of the poncho is held in place by being between your back and the main seat. Vision has attached a yellow lycra extension to the back of the poncho so that you can easily reach behind your back and pull the lycra flap down to position the poncho on your shoulders. There is an ample, zippered opening for your helmeted head. A flap with a velcro closure keeps rain from

it to allow water to run off. I don't flip inside when I'm in a flat descent. The yellow color increases my visibility as well.

I am hard-pressed to find disadvantages, but here are a few thoughts. In really splashy conditions, the poncho won't protect from spray entering from the sides because it does not fully enclose you, and is not intended to do that. With the fairsing, fenders and rain poncho, however, I've ridden for close to an hour in light rain in street clothes and stayed virtually dry.

The poncho doesn't allow you



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to use your feet, and other people who need to look at the pedals to get their feet connected might find that disconcerting at first. I had no problems with that myself. People with mirrors set up low on US bikes will have their rear view obscured. A helmet mirror might be necessary. With my AIS arrangement, I have the mirror mounted on the end of the handlebars. It extends beyond the edge of the pods, so visibility is no problem. Vision wisely suggests to try this podco out in controlled situations before using it on a regular basis.

The price for the podco is \$100 from Vision (the Vision Zipper fairsing is not included, though necessary). I think it is worth the price if you have to regularly deal with the capricious weather like you have in the Pacific Northwest. My commute in the morning is at times dry, and I don't always bring my rain gear. On my way home in the afternoon, the

weather often takes a turn toward the soggy. I can quickly attach the podco and get home in my regular clothes without being soaked. I always carry it with me.

I'm not sure if the podco adds up to my aerodynamic efficiency, but it's as close to a guarantee as I'll ever get. The riding on my LWB is aerodynamically pleasing, and the podco seems like a natural extension. Vision has created a practical piece of equipment here in this dandy little podco, and it's worthy of your consideration. The only suggestion that I would make is that the sides of the podco are an excellent place for some reflective material. I would increase your side visibility in dim conditions. In the final analysis, my ultimate test for equipment is whether I use it a lot. I do. It's always on my bike in use or in my rack bag. I don't leave home without it. ☺