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THE SPIN

More money requested to study bike safety

By Susan Carpenter, Times Staff Writer
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The U.S. Department of Transportation budget request, unveiled last week, includes \$6 million to fund motorcyclist safety grants through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for fiscal year 2008.

"One of the reasons we're focusing on motorcycle safety is in 2005 motorcycle fatalities increased for the eighth year in a row, and we feel we have to directly target the issue," Transportation Secretary Mary Peters said during a media teleconference.



If approved by Congress, the money would be used to help states adopt and implement programs to reduce the number of motorcycle accidents. Programs would include training courses, the recruitment and retention of motorcyclist safety instructors, and public awareness and outreach programs.

Harley strike cuts production

There's bad news for potential buyers of Harley-Davidson's touring and softail models. Union employees at the company's final assembly facility in York, Penn., went on strike over wages and health benefits Feb. 2, and reverberations are being felt further back in the manufacturing cycle.

As a result, Harley expects to reduce production of its big twin engines, transmissions and injection-molded components at two of its other plants.

"I want to wait," most buyers say

Between 75% and 90% of motorcycle shoppers don't buy a bike the same day they visit a dealer. The results of the 2007 Pied Piper Prospect Satisfaction Index Motorcycle Industry Study came out Feb. 5, showing which what dealers had the best success rates at turning shoppers into buyers and why.

Harley-Davidson dealerships took top honors, but Buell, Big Dog, Victory, Ducati, Suzuki and BMW also ranked above the industry average.

Harley-Davidson ranked best overall, but Ducati dealers scored high marks for promoting accessories, Kawasaki for promoting financing, Suzuki for focusing and narrowing shoppers' choices and Victory for offering test rides.