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3 new scooters join police force

23-mph devices to aid patrols of fests, downtown

Abby Slutsky | The Journal Gazette

The Fort Wayne Police Department has added three scooters to its fleet to increase patrols downtown and during festivals.

Officials will announce the purchase of three T3 Motion electric scooters Wednesday, Chief Rusty York said Monday.

The scooters are similar to the Segway Personal Transporters but have three wheels instead of two.

The cost of three T3s – at \$7,800 each – was \$7,000 less than one patrol car would have been, York said. The money came from the department's vehicle budget, but the scooters were not bought in place of a cruiser.

With fuel costs rising above \$4 a gallon, the electric scooters offered an alternative to patrolling downtown in police cars, he said.

York said he first noticed the T3s a few years ago when they were shown at police expositions and he had a chance to try them out.

"We thought, planning ahead, this might be a good investment. Looking toward the future, we bought them with Harrison Square in mind," York said.

York said the scooters, which can reach speeds of 23 mph and can be used for about eight hours before needing to be recharged, will also be used at festivals, beginning with this year's Fort Wayne Newspapers Three Rivers Festival, and on the Rivergreenway. The scooters can't go on ice and snow and won't be used year-round.

Like bike patrols, officers can choose to patrol on the T3s and will have a chance to learn how to use them, York said.

Although officers will continue to patrol on foot and bicycle, the T3s allow them to cover more ground than foot patrols can and at 23 mph can move faster than bicycles, he said.

The scooters are driven standing up so officers can see and be seen in crowded areas, he said.

York also said the scooters can be used at indoor venues, such as Grand Wayne Center, if there is a need.

Allen County Sheriff Ken Fries, whose officers regularly work patrol inside Memorial Coliseum, said he could not justify the expense of the scooters for his department.

"As far as I'm concerned, they'd have to walk," Fries said, adding the scooters are not conducive to the county patrol officers' needs to be able to get from one side of the county to the other quickly.

However, he said, "if someone was willing to donate them to the department, I'd be glad to have them."

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