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Local & State

Posted on Wed, Nov. 21, 2007

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Macon officers test drive scooter-like vehicle

By Amy Leigh Womack - awomack@macon.com

Macon police officers could soon be zooming around downtown - but not in cars or on motorcycles.

Police Chief Mike Burns said he's considering purchasing two personal mobility vehicles that would allow officers "walking the beat" to get around faster and be more visible.

Lt. Eric Woodford said he and two officers test drove a T3 Motion personal mobility vehicle while "The Oprah Winfrey Show" was in town Saturday.

Burns said discussions about the three-wheel, scooter-like vehicles began in October, before Winfrey announced the date her show would be taping in Macon. The manufacturer stopped in Macon last weekend on a multi-city selling tour to offer police a chance to test drive the vehicle.

"It just happened to come when Oprah was in town," Woodford said.

Burns said he still wants officers to take another test drive before committing to a purchase, but he can see where they'd be useful in patrolling downtown Macon and special events.

"We think they could be helpful, but we want to make sure the officers see a need," he said.

Woodford said the vehicles could also be used to patrol shopping centers and the mall.

"It'd be good anywhere with large crowds where you can't get a car," he said.

The vehicles are equipped with blue lights, sirens and a horn and can move much faster than a police officer on foot, Woodford said.

"It's quick to get on and quick to get off," he said. "It's fairly simple."



Beau Cabell, The Telegraph
 A Macon police officer rides a personal mobility vehicle Saturday near the City Auditorium. Lt. Eric Woodford said he and two officers test drove the vehicles.

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Burns said he's drawn not only to the fact the vehicles would allow officers to get around faster than walking but that the devices still offer officers the opportunity to interact with residents.

"They can still stop and talk to people," he said.

Burns said the vehicles would cost \$9,800 each.

If the police department chooses to buy one or two, he said they would be paid for out of confiscated funds.

To contact writer Amy Leigh Womack, call 744-4398.

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