



POLICE: Falls cops looking at electric powered vehicles

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— Falls police Traffic Capt. Salvatore Pino took a quick spin on the T3 Motion three-wheel scooter and had just one complaint.

“You can’t pop a wheelie on it ’cause it’s front-wheel drive,” Pino said. “But if you could, that would be cool.”

The traffic captain did manage to make the tires squeal, though, as he put the battery-powered vehicle through its paces in a demonstration for police brass and Mayor Paul Dyster on Wednesday afternoon at the Falls Public Works Department yard. The city is looking at purchasing the scooter as part of its recently announced “Green Vehicle” initiative.

The City Council has authorized \$100,000 for the purchase of environmentally friendly vehicles.

“We are looking to reduce our fuel costs,” Dyster said, “but these (scooters) can be used to improve our community policing efforts. They are better in pedestrian areas and will be good at events like street festivals. This would be a combination of getting officers into the community and being energy efficient.”

The scooters are billed as “the next generation security tool.” They operate on two lithium batteries, so there are no gas emissions, and can reach speeds of up to 18 mph.

The batteries last eight hours and take three hours to recharge. They turn on a dime, with a zero degree radius and have a raised platform that allows an officer an enhanced view of his patrol area.

Scooters can also be equipped with flashing lights and sirens.

The manufacturer estimates the cost of operation of the scooter at 10 cents a day.

“It combines the advantages of foot patrol and bike patrol in a motorized vehicle,” police Superintendent John Chella said.

Because of its electrical power, the scooter appeared to be virtually silent as officers were testing it.

Chella said that quiet operation is another benefit of the vehicle.

“One of the things we hear from the bike patrol officers is they can catch people in (criminal acts) because (the criminals) doesn’t hear them coming,” Chella said. “With the scooters, you’ll be able to pull into parking lots, on an elevation which will allow you so to see a lot and potentially catch (someone trying to break into a car).”

A sales representative for Major Police Supply, the company that markets the scooter in the northeastern United States, said the vehicle is already in use in Los Angeles and is being tested in New York City. He said customer feedback was “overwhelmingly positive.”

Chella said a motorized scooter can be better if an officer ends up in a chase.

“With a bike patrol, you’re limited by the officers pedaling power and endurance,” Chella said. “Here you only have to worry about their wrist endurance to hold the throttle open.”

City Purchasing Director Dean Spring said a scooter costs about \$9,000. He said he found them while doing an Internet search.

“It’s amazing what you can find on the ’net,” Spring said. “It would appear to be very effective in places with a lot of people.”

Spring said the next step would be to arrange for one or two vehicles to be brought to the Falls for field testing.

“I can see its uses and I can see some limitations,” Pino said.

The traffic captain pointed out the scooters would have to be transported to areas where they would be used because they are not “street legal” and can’t be driven on roadways.

Dyster said purchasing some scooters would bring a “high-tech” element to the city’s vehicle fleet.

“We think it’s a step we can take to look at the use of alternative fuel vehicles,” the mayor said. “It’s cutting edge.”

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Photos



James Neiss/staff photographer Niagara Falls, NY - Chris Corwith, with Major Police Supply, center, shows off an electric T3 Personal Mobility device to Niagara Falls Police Captain John Demarco, left, and Police Superintendent John Chella, during a demonstration at the Niagara Falls Corporation Yard.



James Neiss/staff photographer Niagara Falls, NY - Niagara Falls Police Traffic Captain Salvatore Pino, tests drives an electric T3 Personal Mobility device being demonstrated by a representative from Major Police Supply, at the Niagara Falls Corporation Yard.