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T3 Series Personal Mobility Unit

Written by Kevin Gordon

Southern California-based T3 Motion has released the all-new T3 Series personal mobility unit. Unveiled at the annual IACP conference in Boston, the T3 has been described as a tricycle on steroids. The three-wheeled upright unit was designed with the input of law enforcement officials.

T3 Motion brought together a team of management and environmental experts in 2003. The stated purpose was to explore the unmet needs of personal and fleet transportation and to propose solutions to enable professional personal mobility. Since 2003, T3 Motion has engaged in extensive research and development of the mobility market.

Neil Brooker, president of T3 Motion said, "T3 Motion has responded to the immediate need for personal mobility solutions through innovative engineering and design; It was also imperative that in creating this solution, we remained economically efficient and environmentally responsible."

The flagship T3 Series is being hailed as the next generation law enforcement tool and is being marketed to law enforcement and security for community policing, campus police, airport officers, parking control and park and beach patrols. The T3 Series has been field tested by both law enforcement and private security agencies in southern California.

Brian Buccella, director of sales and marketing for T3 Motion said, "We spent three years in development of the T3, including a great deal of market research. We effectively interviewed law enforcement and campus police, and we wanted to integrate all their needs and suggestions into the T3."

While trials have been ongoing for six months, the T3 Series has only been available since the IACP Conference in November. According to Buccella, the response from the chiefs who viewed the new product at the convention was nothing short of amazing.

Some of the results of these suggestions from the various agencies included the integrated lighting that meets law enforcement safety standards and a stable platform that raises the officer above the crowd. Buccella said officers wanted items built in, not added on, which is why the T3 has an onboard siren, a PA system, and a built-in heads-up display with odometer, trip meter and other displays the officers requested.

The top speed of 25 mph, up to 75-mile range and onboard storage plus soft pack storage mounted on vehicle also reflect the requests of the agencies. An optional GPS Data Logger allows an agency to use existing internal software to track the vehicle, including location, methods of operation, speeds, etc.

"We only sell to law enforcement, public safety and private industry for security," Buccella said. "Our product was specifically developed for the law enforcement, security and government sectors, and that is reflected in the final product." An available accessory is the patrol rifle-shotgun mount, and a ballistic shield



for active shooting situations is under development.

As an electric vehicle, the T3 provides clean energy and zero gas emissions. The onboard officer rides about 8 inches higher than those on foot, providing a greater vantage point. This simple-to-operate unit has a top speed of 25 miles per hour and a zero-degree turning radius. Vehicle payload is an impressive 425 pounds, and an optional trailer is proving to be a popular accessory.

The trailer has a capacity of 1,000 pounds, and is already available in several versions. It has a flatbed trailer for conventional hauling, as well as a box trailer that is being used by campus police. The box trailer has mounts for four bikes, which allows campus officers to easily haul lost/recovered bikes back to headquarters.

A suggestion from the Boston Police is a flatbed trailer with a kennel mounted on it to haul a K9. Boston Police will soon try out a unit set up for EMS. The T3 and trailer are also available for parking and meter enforcement, not just citation issuance but money collection and meter head replacement.

Commander John Radeleff serves as the chief technology officer for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Radeleff recently commented on his agency's experience with the T3, where it is being used at the department's Avalon Station on Catalina Island. Avalon is a small island community with narrow streets, many too narrow for standard vehicles. Because tourism is a big part of the economy, the island sees significant pedestrian traffic, particularly in the summer months.

Radeleff said, "For years, deputies have relied on golf carts to perform many of their duties around town. However, the golf carts provide limited visibility as the deputies sit lower than the pedestrians. The T3 serves as a raised observation platform for deputies, greatly enhancing their ability to see over and among crowds. It is providing a degree of speed and mobility [that] is proving very beneficial."

According to Radeleff, deputies have been able to access areas of town that have been historically difficult to get to. "Juveniles periodically congregate in the narrow alleyways where patrol cars have been unable to access. The T3 has been able to quickly enter the alleyways and traverse significant distances in a very short time, enabling deputies to prevent excessive loitering and reduce the potential for crime. In fact, one deputy commented that he would prefer to forgo his patrol car for the versatility of the T3."

The LASD's experience with the T3 has been very enthusiastic with positive results, including improved visibility, speed, stability, and the resulting increase in productivity. Radeleff said his agency's use of the T3 is expanding, and officials are actively pursuing the testing of the T3 in and around several malls, at the Universal Studios CityWalk Sheriff's Substation and at the Community Colleges Bureau, which patrols nine community college campuses located throughout Los Angeles County.

"The use of patrol vehicles on campus property is greatly restricted as most of our interaction is actually in and around the various buildings. We anticipate the T3 will allow a greatly increased response time on campus, among other benefits," Radeleff said.

Interest for the T3 is widespread and includes campus police, military bases, casino security, and downtown centers such as Los Angeles Union Station; you may see them at the next Super Bowl. The T3s have been a boon to community policing efforts because civilians who want to discuss the T3 or inquire about it constantly stop the officers.

Buccella said a Newport Beach, CA high school, school resource officer found that he is approached more by students who took the time to stop and talk with him, even commenting on the officer's "dope ride." The SRO brought the T3 to the high school football game where parents saw it, and the parents were as interested in it as the students.

A recent use by a sheriff's department saw the T3 used to assist officers in citing golf cart drivers who were violating stop signs. That gives a whole new meaning to the term golf marshal! A recent suggestion was to install onboard cameras and use Wi-Fi and Automatic License Plate Recognition. An officer could drive the unit through parking lots and scan the license plates to monitor for stolen or wanted vehicles.

A small department could use the same unit at the high school by the SRO during the day, for main street business visits in the afternoon, parking lot checks in the evening and for local parades on the weekend. Buccella made an interesting comparison between the introduction of the T3 to the police world and the introduction of mountain biking. "Mountain bikes were first used in law enforcement patrol back in the 1970s. Look where it is today. We certainly don't envision replacing mountain bikes or motors, but there definitely is a need and a place for the T3."

Carey Drayton, executive director/chief of University of Southern California Public Safety Department summed up his thoughts after seeing the response from the students and staff at USC, "The T3 definitely has the cool factor."



Powered by two rechargeable lightweight batteries, charging time is three to four hours, and endurance packages allow for 15 to 75 miles before recharging. The T3 operates for less than 10 cents a day, and due to swappable power modules, it has an unlimited range. A standard electrical outlet can recharge the unit. Integrated LED lighting includes headlights, brake lights, running and emergency lights.

The T3 looks like a police vehicle, and its open-air design resembles a three-wheel cart that the operator stands in. The operator has access to familiar equipment including an accelerator, handbrake, instrument panel and speedometer. Brooker said, "Unlike other personal mobility units that are often criticized for their 'gadget-like' aesthetic, the T3 series looks every bit the part of a police vehicle."

"With its raised platform, integrated LED lighting system and open-air design, officials have an improved vantage point and authoritative presence but are also more accessible to the community," Brooker said.

Designed for more effective community policing, the T3 has been proved to improve police response time as well as reducing physical fatigue in officers. The T3 isn't intimidating as a police vehicle, and Brooker said the T3 Series is just the beginning and predicts the public will see additional items.

According to Brooker, "We're excited to bring to market the first in what we anticipate will be a full line of personal mobility solutions. Designed for community policing programs, this intuitive new vehicle will prove the capability of T3 Motion's engineering and carve the path for future products."

The suggested retail for a typical T3 with 30-mile range module and charger is less than \$8,000. A vehicle without module/charger is about \$6,200. As everything is built in, options are few and include a cover, shotgun mount and the GPS system.

The T3 only weighs 200 pounds without the modules, 240 pounds with them, so it can easily be placed in the back of a pickup or small trailer. Many agencies have found they can drive the unit instead of hauling it. The most common module is the 30-mile range. An agency with an extra module can easily drive the T3 to the post in the site area and have a second module charging.

When asked about the learning curve, Buccella said, "Because the T3 has such a stable platform, it is very easy to learn and very easy to operate and can easily be learned in 30 minutes." Expect to see and hear a lot more about the T3 Series.

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