

Parking garage patrols to pick up speed, efficiency

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NORWALK - With the goals of saving money, lowering harmful emissions and improving safety, security guards at the South Norwalk railroad station parking garage may soon be zipping around in new rides.

The city Parking Authority held a demonstration at the garage yesterday morning with the T3 Series personal mobility vehicle, which could be in patrol in Norwalk within two months.

Officials said the battery-powered vehicles would cost just 10 cents a day to operate, saving the city about \$26,000 a year in gasoline costs.

"They definitely work much better than the trucks we use now, and they would be more efficient," said Kathryn Hebert, administrative services manager for the city's Department of Public Works. "We could use them not only inside, but outside as well."

Security patrols now are on foot and in pickup trucks.

The three-wheeled T3, similar to the Segway, is made specifically for police and security use, equipped with flashing lights and sirens. Its battery takes about three hours to charge and it can reach speeds of 18 mph.

"We recognize we need to try and better utilize energy in the city," Hebert said.

The T's 9-inch raised platform provides better visibility than a guard on foot patrol. Also, the vehicles allow guards to quickly turn around and maneuver more fluidly.

"In a regular truck, since the garage is all one way, you have to go all the way up and back around if you want to get somewhere, but with this you can just go back and forth to where you want quickly," Hebert said.

Frank DeMonaco, manager of LAZ Parking Inc., which oversees the city's parking garages, hopes to have at least one T3 in the garage within 30 to 60 days.

"One thing I was concerned about was its ability to go up and down the steep ramps in the garages, but it passed that test with flying colors, as well as going in and out of elevators," DeMonaco said.

He said he began discussions with Securitas, the garage's security firm, to get a T3 as soon as possible. The T3 cost \$8,000 to \$10,000, DeMonaco said.

DeMonaco said officials also are looking to upgrade lighting at the Maritime Aquarium Parking Garage.

Hebert said the fixtures do not produce enough light and making them more efficient would save about \$60,000.

DeMonaco added that even though the garage is new, the lights have failed to produce desired results.

"We're focusing with Intel Energy, and it looks like we found light fixtures that would use 50 percent less power and give off 30 percent more illumination," DeMonaco said.

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