

## Go green or go broke: Alternative vehicles for cops

Agencies of all sizes have a need for lower-speed enforcement, and every agency in America is looking to cut operating costs wherever they can safely do so

By DOUG WYLIE

Remember filling up at the pump for less than two dollars per gallon? You should — it was only four years ago that the national average for a gallon of regular gas slipped to \$1.97, the lowest mark since mid-2005.

But just six months later, prices across the country were climbing again, and by the time we got to summer 2009, we were pondering ways officers could ‘hypermile’ their squad cars.

By summer 2011, we’d reached the four-dollar-per-gallon mark, and some police fleet managers began “grounding” squads, putting two-officer cars on the road in lieu of two single-officer squads.



T3 Patroller in Bradenton, FL

### The Free Market Takes Over

As I write this column, the average price for a gallon of regular gas in the United States is \$3.46, with Department of Energy forecasting the national average to remain about the same (\$3.44) for 2013.

Clearly, the two-dollar gallon is gone.

As a direct result of the steady increase in the cost of gasoline, the latest squad cars being rolled off assembly lines by Ford, Chevy, and Dodge all tout increases in fuel efficiency.

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That’s great news for agencies presently in the midst of purchasing new squads — according to a recent PoliceOne poll nearly 60 percent of agencies are at least considering the purchase of new cars.

On the other side of that coin (pun very much intended), saying you’re *interested* in a new car is far different from *actually purchasing* one, and most agencies are trying to squeeze every last available mile out of their existing fleet.

That same PoliceOne poll indicated that more than 62 percent of agencies retire cars after the odometer has

eclipsed 100,000 miles, and another 23 percent get new cars when the old beater has between 75,000 to 99,000.

As a consequence of this conundrum, the marketplace for personal transport vehicles — such as the Segway X2 and the T3 Motion — has begun to grow in recent years.



The T3 Patroller

Each of the abovementioned companies produces electric-powered, zero-emission personal transporters and/or electric motorbikes that are relatively low in purchase price and maintenance cost, and cost pennies — quite literally — per day to power.

Further, they are surprisingly versatile in mission capabilities.

## Speed, Stealth, and Stability

For starters, let's look at the options from Segway X2 and T3 Motion. You practically cannot enter the terminal building of any major airport in America without seeing at least one of these two-wheel or three-wheel vehicles.

Furthermore, upon arrival at your chosen destination for that particular trip, you'll likely encounter even more personal transporters in the most popular tourist locations.

There's a very, very good reason for this. Getting from point A to point B in a crowded airport terminal is made infinitely easier (and faster) when your mode of transportation is not a pair of boots.

On a Segway or T3 Motion vehicle, you are literally head-and-shoulders above everyone else around you, giving you clear line of sight with which you can choose your path of least resistance.

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This enhanced height has the added benefit for tourist sites with high pedestrian traffic — think of the Navy Pier in Chicago, the Riverwalk in New Orleans, the Beach Boardwalk in Santa Cruz, or any other such tourist hotspot — that the visiting public (and those who prey upon them) can see you, too.

A citizen in need can more easily flag down that officer, and in some cases, the violator contemplating nefarious acts may reconsider this options knowing you're around.

I'm not exactly one to put Community Policing on a pedestal, but well, these

vehicles kind of put policing the community on a pedestal.



*Providencia, Chile Police Department*

Meanwhile, these electric-powered vehicles are incredibly quiet, enabling a silent, stealthy approach upon a scene should the situation require it.

While I've personally never ridden either a Segway or a T3 Motion vehicle, I've seen both of them put through fairly rigorous test drives by operators who know how to press the equipment to the limit. I have no doubt that these demonstrations were conducted by expert riders, but I was stunned to see that neither driver came even slightly close to being thrown from their mounts, despite tight turns and other gut-wrenching maneuvers.

Both of these machines can scoot right along. The Segway X2 tops out at about 12 miles per hour, and the T3 Motion can reportedly hit about twice that speed.

To put that in perspective, Olympic Gold Medalist Usain Bolt tops out at about 23 miles per hour, but your average mope on the street can be credibly chased by the 12 MPH Segway.

## Fixing Several Problems at Once

Some cops may resist trends toward these vehicle options, but the fact is that agencies of all size have a need for lower-speed enforcement, and absolutely every agency in America is looking to cut operating costs wherever they can safely do so.

Not to put too fine a point on it, much in the same way that the Segway and T3 Motion vehicles offer great PR value, so too do electric motorcycles. Let's face it, citizens out there want agencies to spend less money and adopt "green" technologies whenever possible.

These vehicles achieve both objectives right out of the gate.

“Agencies are seeing consistent positive interactions with the public when the public learns their police are using zero gas emission technologies.” Simpson concluded.

Given the combined facts that we'll never again see “cheap gas” and the “green movement” is here to stay, it may be time for law enforcement to give alternative vehicles a test drive.



*San Francisco PD*

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