

Segway® PTs Give a Big Boost to Community-Based Policing

COMMUNITY POLICING

Bridgeport, Connecticut, Police Department

Bridgeport, Connecticut, is a picturesque waterfront city of 140,000 people located on the Long Island Sound between New York and Boston. Known as "Park City" for its beautiful Seaside and Beardsley Parks, Bridgeport covers an area of 12.5 square miles/20 kilometers and encompasses many ethnically diverse neighborhoods and a dynamic business community.

When Bryan Norwood was sworn in as police chief in April 2006 he brought to the job 17 years of police experience and a strong belief in the benefits of community policing. Not surprisingly, he soon began looking for ways to forge stronger relationships between his 412 officers and the communities they serve.

"We believe strongly in the philosophy of community policing and early on I was looking for ways to bring my patrol officers closer to the community," said Norwood. "About three weeks into my job a representative from the Westport Segway dealership stopped in to demonstrate the Segway PT. We were intrigued, so he left a unit for us to try out. After a few days we were convinced that this new technology would enable our patrol officers to engage people and build relationships, so we decided to purchase a few units. We also decided that we would wait to place the order until the new Segway i2s were out. We took delivery of four i2s and a month later we purchased four x2s."

According to Norwood, the first officers to use the Segway i2s were those who were already part of the bike patrol team. "We were hosting a bicycle training class for 30 officers back in October, so we added a two-hour segment on the Segway i2 at the same time," said Norwood. "Now, as a matter of policy, all bike patrol officers are thoroughly cross-trained on the i2s and x2s, and we continue to add other patrol officers on a regular basis. Within a month we had just over 40 officers trained on the Segway units.

Bridgeport's Segway i2s were first employed for patrols in the downtown business district, an area of about 12 square blocks. In that environment, the biggest benefit of the implementation was increased visibility—a phenomenon that works both ways.

"On a tactical level, the i2 is a great platform to work on. For the officers on Segway PTs, having good sightlines into stores and over

crowds and pedestrians is a really big thing, but for me it's a huge benefit that the people notice them," says Norwood. "Our officers equipped with Segway PTs wear the same uniform as the bicycle patrols—a bright yellow jacket with markings that say 'Police' on the back. The officer also stands 8 inches/20 centimeters taller on the i2, so

"In general, if a municipality is using community-based policing as their platform, the Segway PT is the tool," says Norwood. "It allows cops to get out of their cars, be in touch with people and create dialog. It's one of those tools that the cops say 'Wow, I didn't know you could use it that way.' For us, it has been a big success."

-Bryan Norwood
Police Chief
Bridgeport, Connecticut,
Police Department

now you can see the cop on a Segway i2 from about 5 blocks away. People downtown feel more secure. For the last 10-12 years the downtown has been a no-man's land, but that's quickly changing, and the business people love the Segway PTs. One of the first things they say to me is 'Chief I saw this cop today and he was floating by my window.' Now, they may see the officer come by their

Executive Summary

THE CHALLENGE

- Find ways to build relationships between the police and the neighborhoods they patrol
- Make businesspeople and visitors feel safe in the downtown business district

THE SOLUTION

- Acquire eight Segway Personal Transporters—four i2s and four cross-terrain x2s
- Use Segway PTs to patrol the downtown and selected neighborhoods and special events

BENEFITS TO THE CUSTOMER

- Enhanced community-based policing efforts citywide
- Increase perception of police presence and safety in the downtown
- Ideal coverage of special event sites and large parking garages
- Improved morale among patrol officers

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window three or four times throughout the day. They notice the officers far more than when they were patrolling on foot.”

Based on the successful implementation downtown, the police department is now using the i2s and the x2s on walking beats in residential neighborhoods, some of which have been very challenging environments. “We use the i2s every day downtown, but I have walking beats in some really tough neighborhoods and once or twice a week I let the officers take out the i2s instead,” says Norwood. “And you know, the device is a real icebreaker. The officers always come back with anecdotes about how kids and adults stop them and ask a million questions—‘how does it stay up?’ and ‘how fast does it go?’ It gives the officers the opportunity to have an engaging conversation with people and use it as a tool to get to know them.”

According to Norwood, the officers on the patrol agree. “The officers are fighting over them,” laughs Norwood. “Tonight I have several walking beats going out on an eight-hour shift and all of the officers who are certified to use the Segway PTs are going to call me and ask if they can use them. It’s always a matter of do I have enough units for everyone who wants one.”

Norwood also uses the i2s and x2s in special event situations with big crowds and lots of traffic. “We used the units for our Concerts on the Green and at Harbor Yard Arena,” says Norwood. The Who just performed here to a sold-out concert of 10,000 people and I had three Segway i2s out there and all we heard was how great it was to see the cops on the Segway PTs and how approachable they were. Those officers also used the units to patrol the entire parking garage. They said that they can cover all five levels in ten minutes and see everything.”

In spring, as Beardsley and Seaside parks fill up with residents and tourists, Chief Norwood will put the cross-terrain x2s on patrols in those expansive environments. “The x2s have the ability to take our officers off the sidewalks so they’ll be a good fit in for our park patrols. Meanwhile, they are perfect for when we have a little snow on the ground.” ■

