

SEGWAY®

Segway® PTs Give a Big Boost to Community Based Policing

CUSTOMER:

Bridgeport Police Department
Bridgeport, CT

CHALLENGES:

Build relationships between police officers and the neighborhoods they patrol

Ensure business people and visitors feel safe in the downtown business district

SOLUTION:

Eight Segway Personal Transporters (PTs) – four i2s and four x2s that:

Improve community-based policing efforts citywide

Increase police presence in the downtown area

Enhance patrol coverage of special events and large parking garages

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 Beardsley and Seaside Parks, Bridgeport covers an area of approximately 12 square miles/20 kilometers and includes many diverse neighborhoods as well as a dynamic business community.

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

"About three weeks into my new job, a representative from a local Segway dealership stopped in to demonstrate the Segway PT. We were intrigued and he left a unit for us to try out," said Chief Norwood. "After a few days we were convinced that the PT would enable our patrol officers to engage with people and build relationships. Soon after, we took delivery of four i2s and a month later purchased four x2s."

The first officers to use the Segway i2s were part of the bike patrol team. The department was hosting a bicycle training class for 30 officers and added a two-hour Segway i2 training segment.

Chief Norwood added, "As a matter of policy, all bike patrol officers are thoroughly cross-trained on i2s and x2s. Within a month we had just over 40 officers trained on Segway PTs."

Bridgeport PD's Segway i2s were first deployed 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. Officers on Segway PTs, have good sightlines into stores and over crowds and pedestrians. It's a huge benefit that people notice them," said Chief Norwood.

Bridgeport officers who ride Segway PTs wear the same uniform as the bicycle patrol officers — a bright yellow jacket with 'Police' markings

on the back. The officer also stands 8 inches/20 centimeters taller on the i2. Pedestrians can see them from 5 blocks away.

"For the last several years the downtown has been a no-man's land, but that's quickly changing. Business owners love Segway PTs. They see officers ride by their window three or four times throughout the day. They notice them far more than when they were patrolling on foot," said Chief Norwood.

He added, "We use i2s every day downtown, but I have walking beats in some tough neighborhoods and once or twice a week I let officers take out the i2s instead. The PT is a real icebreaker. Officers often talk about how people stop them and ask a million questions — 'How does it stay up?' and 'How fast does it go?' It gives officers the opportunity to have an engaging conversation with people and get to know them."

"Officers are fighting over them. Tonight I have several walking beat officers going out on an eight-hour shift and all of those certified to use the Segway PT are going to ask if they can ride one," laughed Chief Norwood. "It's always a matter of whether I have enough PTs for everyone who wants one."

Norwood also uses i2s and x2s to patrol special events. Those occasions range from concerts to community events that draw large crowds and lots of traffic.

"The Who performed to a sold-out audience of 10,000 people here. I had three Segway i2s out there and all I heard was how great it was to see cops on Segway PTs and how approachable officers were," commented Chief Norwood. "PTs are also used to patrol our vast parking garage. Officers are able to see everything and patrol all five levels in ten minutes."

In the spring, Beardsley and Seaside Parks quickly fill with residents and tourists. Chief Norwood readily puts cross-terrain x2s on patrols in these off-road environments.

He added, "The x2s have the ability to take officers off the sidewalks. They're a good fit for our park patrols — and they handle well when there's a little snow on the ground."

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