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## City police officers may get Segways

*By Michael Valkys  
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City of Poughkeepsie police could soon patrol downtown aboard Segways - the futuristic personal transporters that an increasing number of beat officers across the country are using.

The city department recently received a \$13,000 state grant to purchase two Segways for officers to use in the downtown business district and at large public events. Officials said Segway patrols would likely debut next spring.

"It's another resource, another tool that our police officers are going to be able to utilize," Mayor John Tkazyik said. While the grant specifically mentions the city's central business district would benefit from Segway patrols, Tkazyik also envisions officers using Segways at concerts, parades and festivals.

## Walkway may get patrols

The mayor said Segway patrols may also be employed on the Walkway Over the Hudson, the former railroad bridge set to open in October as a public park above the Hudson River for pedestrians and cyclists.

The Segway was featured prominently for laughs on the big screen in the recent Kevin James comedy "Paul Blart: Mall Cop," but more and more police departments are using it as a legitimate law enforcement tool.

Town of Lloyd police last year became the first department in Ulster County to purchase the device. Major cities including New York, Chicago and Washington also use Segways. According to the company's Web site, Segways are used by patrol officers in more than 1,000 organizations across the globe, from police departments and security companies to universities.

Poughkeepsie police Chief Ron Knapp said city officers recently used Segways provided by a local business at a community event - and police came away impressed with the devices.

"They came to me wanting them," Knapp said. "The cops that used it saw the many benefits."

Company and law enforcement officials said Segways increase officers' sightlines and improve police coverage at large public gatherings. The devices are also good public relations tools, encouraging interaction between officers and community members who are inevitably curious about the machines.

Officers on Segways tower eight inches above the crowd - allowing them to better survey activity on downtown streets and sidewalks. The Segways also make police more visible to residents and business owners. Police on Segways can also get better views into store windows when they patrol business districts.

The Albuquerque, N.M., police department uses Segways in that city's downtown area. Police there

said the device allows closer interaction with residents and helps reduce officer fatigue.

"Before we got Segways we would walk miles and miles," Officer Jerome Armijo told Law Officer magazine in an interview last year. "Now we're able to respond to calls more quickly and not be as tired. ... It's better for the officer physically."

While it's unlikely Poughkeepsie police would use Segways on a regular basis to chase and arrest suspects, the devices are faster than one might expect. The device's standard setting speed is 12.5 mph, which the company's Web site notes is roughly equivalent to running a five-minute mile.

Poughkeepsie's \$13,000 grant came as a member item from state Assemblyman Frank Skartados, D-Marlborough, who represents the city in the Legislature.

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