


AUTOMOTIVE CLASSIFIED INSIDE AND AT  THE TRIBUNE'S ONLINE AUTO GUIDE

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Standing tall



Dick Schnell, of Morton Grove, and Alex Ko, Santa Clara, Calif., ride their Segways on the lakeshore path near Burnham Harbor during the Segway convention.



Marc Hodosh, Brookline, Mass., participates in an agility competition at the SegwayFest in Chicago.

Convention lets Segway owners gather and glide

By Chuck Green
Special to the Tribune

To Chandra Reynolds, her Segway Human Transporter is close to a little piece of heaven.

"It's like riding a magic carpet," she said.

Judging by the First Annual SegwayFest! 2003 convention last month at Hyatt Regency McCormick Place, she probably isn't the only one who feels that way.

Reynolds, of Riverside, and about 200 fellow enthusiasts, some of whom came from as far as Anchorage, Honolulu and Amsterdam, participated in the two-day event that featured in-depth workshops, educational seminars, social gatherings and speakers, including Dean Kamen, founder and chairman of Segway.

And the event became a playground of sorts for those who, with contagious enthusiasm, adroitly glided and maneuvered their Segways through hallways, doorways and an obstacle course.

"We thought if we got 50 attendees for the first one, it would be successful. We have four times that many," said Jim Reynolds, one of the organizers of the two-day event, along with Chicagoan Bruce Hillyer.

"When I was a kid, I always heard that there were a lot of inventions, like flying cars, coming down the pike," said Reynolds. "But the Segway is the first invention I've seen that kind of delivers on that promise."

Segway engineer Doug Field said the magic of the Segway HT i Series, unveiled several months ago, is in its balancing technology.

"A lot of products use electricity. I think the impressive thing about the Segway is the fact that it balances. The highest level of evolution is human, so standing up on two legs and walking is one thing that separates us from the animals. We sort of see [the Segway] as the same level of evolution of four-wheeled typical vehicles."

Phillip Torrone saw the Segway as a way to ratchet down to one car. "I'd been trying to figure out how to get rid of my car, but there weren't any travel solutions. I have to dress up for work, so I really can't cycle to the office. And since there's

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Segway HT owners cross King Drive to return to the McCormick Hyatt Hotel's Convention Center for their first convention.

SEGWAY: Commuters put the two-wheelers to good use

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

no shower there, bicycling wasn't really an option," said the Seattle resident.

"I looked at electric bikes, and they really couldn't do the hills; we have some pretty steep ones in Seattle. Then I looked at other things, but they still kept me in same bucket, which is gas, insurance, payments, parking. On average I was spending about \$600 a month on just owning a car. So I was interested in any solution."

Torrone was skeptical when his wife turned him onto the Segway: "I didn't think it was going to live up to its billing. Eventually, I got a chance to try one, and I used it on my commute for about 30 days and figured out I could get [out] of my car." Torrone said. "It's already paid for itself. I'd say about 90 percent of my trips are covered with the Segway; for the other 10 percent, I'll ride my bike, carpool or walk, or use my wife's car."

By the same token, Reynolds said his wife wasn't a happy camper when she accompanied him to a training session for the Segway before the convention.

"She was in a bad mood that day, so when I opened the door [to the training room], she said to me, 'the things I go through for you.' But when she stepped on the machine, she was enthralled and said we have to buy another one."

According to Segway, 40 states have passed legislation allowing the Segway HTs on sidewalks and five states never restricted electric devices on the sidewalk. Illinois passed a measure allowing Segways in towns that pass ordinances permitting them. Legislation to allow is being pursued in three states, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York.

Because of their smaller populations, legislation is not being pursued in North Dakota or Wyoming, San Francisco and La Mirada, Calif., have restricted Segway HTs from the sidewalk. In those cities, Segway HTs may be operated on bike paths and streets.

The way Pat Nowak, a resident of Port Huron, Mich., sees it, it's just as well that not everyone has jumped on the Segway bandwagon yet.

"I, for one, am very happy that they didn't sell 10 million of them the first day and inundate the sidewalks of every city in the world. There would be an adverse reaction because society needs time to acclimate to new technology, and Segways are going to have to deal with that too."

Eventually, though, he thinks the Segway HT, available at a suggested retail price of \$4,950



Photos for the Tribune by Margo Cohn

Chicago Police Officer Lisa Campbell plays roller ball, an agility competition in which the participants try to avoid the balls, at Segway-Fest!

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Phillip Torrone of Seattle

(there is not a retail location in Chicago but they are available through Amazon.com), will hit its stride in a big way. "I have no doubt I'm seeing the beginning of something my grandchildren will find as common as a bicycle or automobile."

Sometimes, said Barrington resident Michael Steven, you just have to go for it. "Even if it's not always practical, [the Segway] is still a gas."



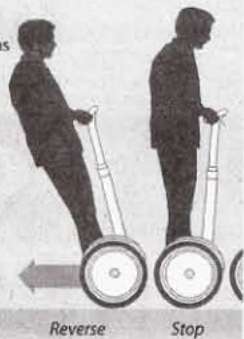
Leonard Timm of Celebration, Fla., takes a seat on his Segway because of a disability.

A human transporter

The self-balancing transportation machine uses a technology called "dynamic stabilization" to stay upright. Gyroscopes and tilt sensors in the platform monitor a passenger's center of gravity about 100 times a second. The transporter has a top speed of about 12.5 miles an hour, is powered by rechargeable batteries and can carry passengers weighing up to 250 pounds.

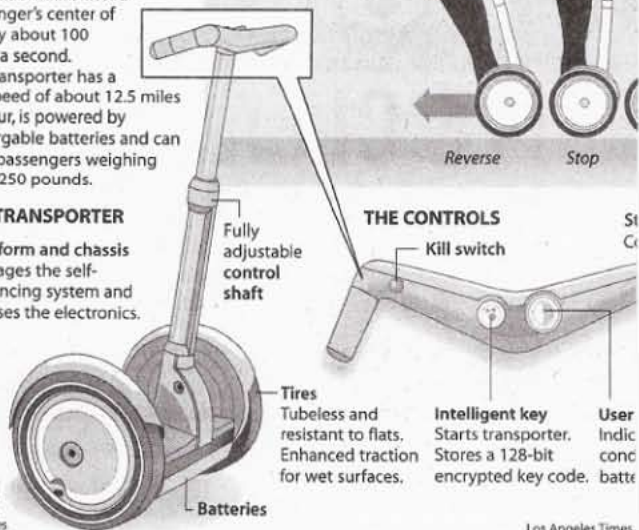
DYNAMIC STABILIZATION

When a passenger leans forward, the device notes the change and moves forward. Reverse occurs when a rider leans back.



THE TRANSPORTER

Platform and chassis Engages the self-balancing system and houses the electronics.



Sources: Segway, L.A. Times

Los Angeles Times