

Case Study

Albuquerque Police Department Covers a Downtown Beat with Segway® PTs

COMMUNITY POLICING

Albuquerque Police Department

Albuquerque, the largest city in New Mexico, has a vibrant downtown and a population of nearly half a million people. For several years the city has assigned a walking officer to the downtown beat in an effort to strengthen its police presence and forge stronger relationships between the police department, downtown businesses and the public. In early 2006, they gave this program even more traction when they acquired three Segway Personal Transporters (PTs) for the downtown bureau. By all accounts, the Segway PTs have been a big success.

Patrolman First Class Jerome Armijo has been an officer with the Albuquerque Police Department for 19 years, and has been walking the downtown beat since 2004. He is the only officer with an assigned walking beat, and he routinely covers an area of 10 square blocks

“[The Segway PT] makes me more approachable. We now have a chance to build stronger relationships with the people who visit downtown.”

- Patrolman First Class
Jerome Armijo,
Albuquerque Police Department

in the central downtown. He first test rode a Segway PT in 2004, and thought of it as a great piece of technology and “an interesting toy,” but not much else.

A year later, the chief of police and mayor asked the downtown bureau to take a closer look at the capabilities of the Segway PT as a patrol tool, and officer Armijo was given a unit to use for an entire week. Over that time his perception of the Segway PT underwent a dramatic transformation.

“I’m assigned to a walking beat in the downtown, which is largely concentrated along 10

blocks of Central Avenue,” says Armijo. “I’m the only walking beat officer out of close to a thousand total officers on the force, and my job is to serve downtown businesses and visitors by patrolling the area and responding to calls.”

“When I test drove the Segway PT back in 2004 I thought it was a neat toy. Nothing more,” says Armijo. “However, in October 2005 I was given a unit to use for an entire week, and I began to see that it could be easily integrated into what I’m doing every day on my job. I saw what it could do in terms of cutting response times and building relationships with the public, and I came to think of it as a valuable tool. In the end I recommended that our downtown bureau purchase the machine.”

Officers Arrive Quickly, While Avoiding Exhaustion

In early 2006, the downtown bureau took delivery of three Segway PTs, two of which were to be used as fleet units by officers on the evening shifts. The other Segway PT was assigned to Officer Armijo. “When it was assigned to me and I knew it was my tool, it quickly enhanced my job,” says Armijo. “I walk from 1st Street to 10th Street, and in the past I’d get a lot of calls that required me to run 5, 6 or 7 blocks to respond. If my shift starts at 7:30 a.m. and I get a half dozen of these calls in the morning by 1 in the afternoon I’m wasted. Last summer was particularly rough because it was very hot and I would get dehydrated. The Segway PT has changed all of that. I’ve been able to extend my range, and answer a lot more calls for service.”

“For example, when I got my first call this morning I was at 2nd and Copper, and I needed to respond to a location 6 blocks away where someone had found a briefcase with personal contents. I went to the site on my Segway PT and within minutes I was able to find out where the owner was located – about 7 blocks away – and return the briefcase to him. I probably average 10 calls a day and now it’s easy and fast.”

Patrolling the Community in an Approachable Way

The department has also found that the Segway PTs are valuable during busy downtown events.

Executive Summary

THE CHALLENGE

- Improve response times to police calls in the downtown sector
- Improve relations between police officers and downtown businesses and visitors

THE SOLUTION

- Acquire three Segway PTs for the downtown bureau of the Albuquerque Police Department
- Provide the walking beat officer with his own Segway PT for daytime patrols
- Use two Segway PTs for officers to share during evening patrols

BENEFITS TO THE CUSTOMER

- Officer emergency response times have improved
- Facilitates officer interaction with the public
- Officers are able to respond to calls without fatigue

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“We have a spring crawl three times a year in the downtown area when we close off the streets and have live bands,” says Armijo. “It covers about seven blocks and draws thousands of people. Our Captain, another officer and I patrol this event on the Segway PTs and we’re able to cover so much more territory than we could on foot, and we are very accessible. During the last event there was a call about a fight in progress and officers were running down the street to get to the scene three blocks away, and we were passing them like they were standing still. And they were going to be tired when they got there, while we arrived rested and ready to deal with the situation.”

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According to Officer Armijo, one of the greatest benefits of the Segway PT is its ability to break the ice and get people talking to beat officers. “I’ve always had a good relationship with downtown businesses that I’d see on my walking beat, but the real change has been with citizens,” says Armijo. “Many of them who wouldn’t talk to me before when I patrolled on foot, are now coming up and asking about the Segway. It’s a friendly tool. It makes me more approachable. We now have a chance to build stronger relationships with the people who visit downtown.” ■

