

Take Your Segway to the Subway?

By ERIC RAPP

(May 2, 2002) Segway, the newest concept in personal mobility, came to the MTA, recently. Interest in the two-wheeled scooter reflects the agency's desire to monitor cutting-edge transportation technology.

The Segway is a gyroscope stabilized, electrically driven human transportation device. With a top speed of 12.5 miles per hour and a range of about 11 miles, it's perfect for "those trips where it is just too far to walk, or you might have things to carry, but it seems wasteful to drive," says Stas Wolk, regional sales director for Segway.

TEST RIDE - Stas Wolk, regional sales director for Segway, clears the way for CEO Roger Snoble's spin around the Plaza.



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PHOTOS: GAYLE ANDERSON

Transportation Planning Manager Robin Blair oversees the project, determining where the MTA might use new technology and working with legislative bodies and manufacturers to help iron out legal issues.

Transportation
Planning Manager
Robin Blair on board
the Segway.



A few lucky MTA employees, including CEO Roger Snoble, got to try the Segway during its visit to Headquarters. "It's a great feeling and a lot of fun; much more fun than driving," he said.

The gyroscopes at the heart of the Segway help keep riders safe from spills. To go forward or back, a rider simply leans in that direction. Standing up straight keeps the unit balanced and stopped. Turning is accomplished with a throttle-type grip on the handlebars. Most people can learn to ride in less than five minutes.

New transportation option

Segway isn't meant to replace cars or become an alternative to mass transit, but is intended to be an entirely new transportation option. The designers of the Segway expect it to help reduce pollution and congestion, and revolutionize urban planning.

Because it can carry up to 75 pounds of cargo in saddlebags, it can be used for shopping, errands, or just about any relatively short trip. The batteries can easily be recharged in about six hours from a standard 110-volt outlet.

"I think this will be good for Los Angeles," said Snoble. "It will give people a lot more mobility."

Unfortunately, it won't be possible to buy a Segway for personal use until the end of 2002. The cost is estimated to start at about \$3,000.

Commercial models are available now and are under consideration by the MTA, as well as by the Los Angeles Police and County Sheriff's departments. Some Segways are already in use by the U.S. Postal Service, as well as by police departments in Atlanta and Boston.

More information about Segway is available at www.segway.com

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