

# Atlanta police test out new space-age scooters

BY ERIN MCCLAM  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA — Purse-snatchers beware: Atlanta police are armed with shiny new \$9,000 scooters — and it'll take at least a brisk jog to get away from them.

The city's finest unveiled a battalion of Segway Human Transporters on Tuesday, donning helmets and topping out at a cool 12 mph on the battery-powered, gyroscope-stabilized machines.

Inventor Dean Kamen introduced the scooters last fall after keeping them secret for months under the code names IT and Ginger. Kamen says the machines, designed for short distances, will revolutionize human travel.

Police in Atlanta — a traffic-snarled city that never met a motor vehicle it didn't like — are borrowing six of the scooters from Kamen's company for a two-month test run starting this week.

The department wants to know whether scooter patrols will be more effective than foot or bicycle patrols, and also hopes to use the machines to boost police visibility in the city.

A handful of officers showed off their new two-wheeled toys in a brief demonstration downtown, bobbing back and forth and mugging for TV cameras.

"Your initial reaction is to try to balance yourself, but this does it for you," Officer Jennings Kilgore said atop one of the scooters. "It's much easier to ride this than walk."

The scooter detects tiny shifts in body weight, rolling forward or backward depending on which way its user leans. Stabilizing gyroscopes inside make it difficult to fall from or topple.

The police will use them in patrols at Hartsfield Atlanta International Airport and in the downtown business district. The department, awash in debt and

**"It's much easier to ride this than walk."**

JENNINGS KILGORE  
ATLANTA POLICE OFFICER

searching for a new chief, has not committed to buying any of the \$9,000 machines.

"Don't even ask me about the money," Maj. John Woodard said. A consumer model, expected to sell for about \$3,000, is still months away.

Atlanta is the first city to give the scooters a broad tryout, Segway officials say. Georgia Power Co. and the city planning commission each bought two, and tourism officers who walk around downtown will share six.

How the scooters will hold up on the unforgiving streets of Atlanta, where tooth-jarring potholes sometimes go unfilled for months, remains to be seen.

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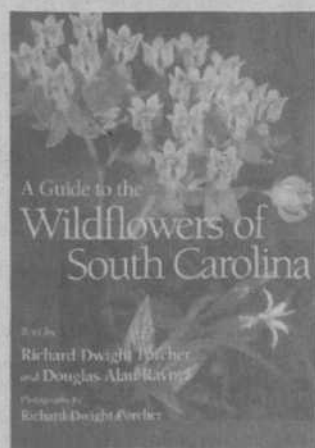
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