



# DIGGIN' IT

## Diggler's new patrol scooter is versatile & 'green'

Choice is a good thing. In the realm of patrol-oriented vehicles, more and more specialized options are coming to the marketplace. In past issues, I've highlighted some interesting patrol vehicles, such as the Segway and T3 Motion, that serve needs conventional patrol vehicles (e.g., Crown Victorias and Impalas) can't. The advantages of these compact vehicles are their mobility and size. They give officers the ability to travel quickly across topography normally exclusive to pedestrian or pedal-bike traffic. Another advantage is that they're electric, which is efficient, environmentally sound and nearly silent in operation. Even with these options, there's still room for other niche products that offer similar advantages, but with a different slant, at a lower price point or with more portability. One such product is the Diggler.

At first glance, the Diggler looks like a cross between a snowboard and a mountain bike. That's because its origin can be found on the hills of California with its many mountain bike trails and downhill grades. Diggler's inventor, Rob Fruechtenicht, is a mountain bike and outdoor sports fanatic. The Diggler has been around since 1996, with the first versions being human and gravity powered. As the Diggler has expanded its capability with the addition of disc brakes and full suspension, the opportunity for an electricity-powered Diggler became apparent.

In 2007, Fruechtenicht's Petaluma, Calif.-based company introduced the

"Electric Diggler," combining the agility of the scooter with the economy of a small, electric engine. As the sales for those units began to climb, interest began to develop from local law enforcement agencies. What caught

Diggler to reflect the needs of LE agencies and the Diggler Patrol was born.

### What Is It?

At first glance, the mountain bike heritage in the Diggler is clear with its upright handlebars, tube chassis, spoked wheels, disc brakes and knobby tires. The operator platform is low and wide, and reminiscent of my skateboarding days, while the electric pack is neatly packaged against the "neck" of the frame. As expected, the handlebar has a small red/blue light with siren. Attached to the underside of the frame is a long skid plate.

The propulsion system for the Diggler varies by model. The Model I is powered by a 36-V, 600-W motor, and weighs in at a very reasonable 67 lbs. The Model II offers better acceleration and top speed with a more powerful 48-V system, and a total weight of 90 lbs.

The "top dog" is the Model III Elite Cruiser, which offers a blazing top speed of over 30 mph, can climb hills with ease and is powered by a 48-V/40-amp 750-W motor. The Model III Elite weighs in at an even 100 lbs.

All three models use a replaceable battery pack that offers a 20-mile range and can be swapped out in minutes. Fruechtenicht estimates that each 20-mile charge will cost the operator a paltry 20 cents in electrical charge, which makes the Diggler very economical to operate. A chainless, brushless hub motor drives every model. The Diggler uses many off-the-shelf mountain bike parts, so replacement parts are available and reasonable to obtain. Some additional



PHOTOS COURTESY DIGGLER PATROL

**With prices ranging from \$1,399 to \$2,499, the Electric Diggler can be a cost-effective option for an agency looking for an officer-mobility transport device.**

their eye was that the Diggler offered a compact, lightweight, maneuverable officer-transport option that could go places the Segway and T3 couldn't, like down flights of stairs, and do so at a lower price point. Seeing this, Fruechtenicht tweaked the



options are available, including a rear cargo bag, a handlebar bag and extra 48-V battery packs. Security-wise, the battery pack is key activated, which makes it more difficult for the wrong person to just jump on and ride away.

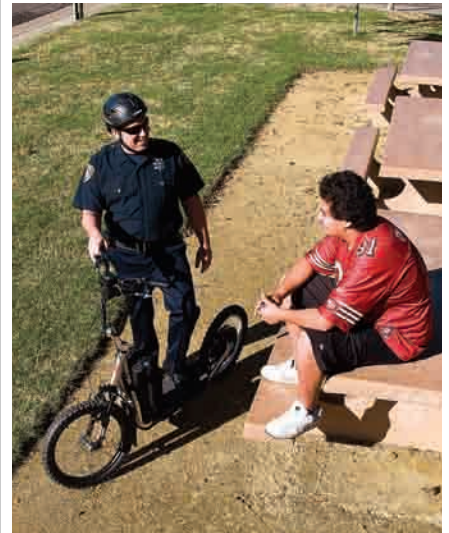
**Advantages**

The scooter is small and lightweight, has an active suspension and is highly

maneuverable. It can sail down trails, stairs and other less-than-smooth surfaces. Yes, the Segway has the ability to travel off-road, but there's no arguing that the long wheelbase and low center of gravity of the Diggler can be advantageous when traversing unstable terrain.

It's inexpensive to buy, operate and fix. The cost of the Model I is \$1,399,

with the Model II at \$1,999, and the Model III Elite Cruiser topping off at \$2,499. This price point is much lower than a T3 or Segway. All together, the Diggler can be a cost-effective option



**The Diggler allows us to go from point A to point B with ease. It's pretty handy & very quiet.**

for an agency looking for an officer-mobility transport device.

One benefit that can't be dismissed is that the Diggler allows officers to get up close to citizens in tight quarters while operating a vehicle that's not intimidating. If anything, it's a got a "cool" factor that many people relate to.

**The Ride**

I had a chance to meet Fruechtenicht at the annual COPSWEST conference in Ontario, Calif., a few months ago. An approachable, laid back guy, Fruechtenicht immediately handed me a Diggler to take for a spin. As low-slung as it is, the Diggler is easy to jump on with its wide platform and long wheelbase. Since electric motors develop maximum torque from zero RPM, applications of throttle were met with instant response. As I tooted around the COPSWEST aisles, there were plenty

of people walking around, making the environment similar to what a patrol officer would encounter in a collegiate or urban environment. The Diggler was very easy to control, and the familiarity of the bike handlebars and other components made the adjustment process a quick one. Suffice it to say, none of the show attendees left in an ambulance, so I consider the Diggler a stable, easy-to-operate platform that officers can acclimate to quickly.

#### Who's Using It?

The Diggler Patrol is currently being used by several California departments, including the Fairfax Police Department, the Gonzalez Police Department,

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the UC Davis Police Department, Stanford University Police, the San Francisco State Police Department and others.

So far, the feedback has been very positive. According to Sgt. Fred Lombardi of the Gonzalez Police Department, "The scooter actually puts the officer about nine inches above the crowd, which makes scanning a crowd much easier. ... I can now cruise right up to the business and make eye contact with the owner or employee through the window. ... They give me a little wave to let me know they saw me."

Chief of Police Annette M. Spicuzza, of the UC Davis Police Department says, "We're finding that it allows us to go from point A to point B with ease. It's pretty handy and very quiet."

#### Summary

The Diggler Patrol Scooter is a new and interesting addition to electric officer-

mobility options available to agencies. It offers maneuverability, capability, efficiency and an environmentally sound propulsion package at a price point that hasn't been available previously. Whether your agency is interested in "green" alternatives, seeking to enhance officer/citizen relationships, wanting to improve response times or is simply on a tight budget, the Diggler is definitely worth a look.

For more information, contact Diggler Patrol online at [www.digglerpatrol.com](http://www.digglerpatrol.com) or call 707/775-2452.

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