

AN ENJOYABLE COMMUTE

Segway is 'cheaper than a convertible and a lot more fun'

Written by **Melanie Morlan**

According to Roger Chase, one of the best things about spring returning to the Inland Empire is his fair-weather ride to work: a Segway individual transportation device.

From his home on Spokane's South Hill, Chase, an attorney for Providence Health & Services' legal department, commutes just 1.5 miles each way to his office at Sacred Heart Medical Center. Surprisingly, he discovered a route that is just as fast on the Segway as it is by car.

"But honestly, in addition to the commuting advantage, I bought it because I love gadgets," Chase says. "The technology fascinated me, and it's just plain fun to ride."

His fascination with the Segway began during the summer of 2003. He took one for a spin around Riverfront Park during a dealer promotional event. He was immediately charmed by the technology and its environmentally friendly simplicity.

"I thought to myself, 'I need to figure out if I can justify commuting by Segway to work,'" he says.

Chase bought his Segway at a Portland dealership in 2005.

The relatively new individual transportation device, created by renowned inventor/engineer Dean Kamen, has been available for public purchase since 2002.

According to Segway Inc.'s promotional literature, the technology consists of a network of sensors, mechanical assemblies and control systems that enable the Segway to balance on two wheels.

"The second you step on," the company's literature says, "five micro-machined gyroscopes and two accelerometers sense the changing terrain and your body position at 100 times per second—faster than the brain can think."

Created with the company's vision of developing highly efficient zero-emission transportation, the Segway is battery-powered. Its battery can be recharged by using any 90- to 260-volt and 50- to 60-hertz power outlet. A complete cycle charge will take eight to 10 hours.

While Chase likes to exercise—he and his wife, Kathy, are currently training

continued on page 52

Roger Chase rides his Segway personal transport in his South Hill neighborhood.



"The technology fascinated me, and it's just plain fun to ride."

— Roger Chase

Build a High Performance Team with...

Adventure Dynamics



"The Adventure Dynamics program was perfect for my staff. The teamwork exercises opened our co-workers up to communication which increased our production and overall attitude, enhancing office morale and cooperation."

—Dr. Jeff Hood,
Evergreen Cosmetic
& Family Dentistry

- Corporate Team Building and Leadership Development

- Company Events & Conferences
- Schools and Sports Teams
- Birthday Parties & Specially Designed Programs for Couples, Church Groups, and Clubs.



www.adventuredynamics.com

509-467-0800

adventuredynamics@earthlink.net

for a 400-mile bicycle tour across western North Dakota—he advises that the Segway is not a workout option. Many people have asked him why he commutes by Segway rather than walking or riding a bicycle to work.

"It's about efficiency," he says. "With the Segway, I just get ready for work like I always do. I can put on a suit, put on my helmet, step on, turn the key, open the garage door, and I'm on my way. I don't have to wear special clothing or shower and change when I get to work."

He says the time he saves allows more time to exercise after work.

A Segway has a top speed of 12.5 mph and can travel 16 to 24 miles per charge. The device can carry a maximum of 260 pounds but is relatively portable, weighing only 80 pounds. It can be partially disassembled and transported in an average-size car trunk. Additionally, with the turn of a handle, it can be put into a position that makes it easier to carry on stairs. Designed to be compact, it can travel most places a human can, including in and out of buildings and elevators. Chase cautions others about one danger he learned the hard way: You are 8 inches taller when on a Segway, maybe 10 inches taller if wearing a helmet. It's easy to forget that you need to duck for doorways.

There are no brakes and no accelerator. The only control lever is a handle that turns like a motorcycle throttle allowing the rider to turn left or right. As you turn, separate motors move one wheel forward and the other backward, enabling the turn. The new models have replaced the handle with a more efficient system, a column on a pivot that allows you to generate your turn by simply leaning to the left or right.

Operating a Segway is easy, Chase says.

"The kinds of motion you use when you ride it are like skiing. The knees are slightly bent; your center of gravity is low; and you shift your body weight as you lean into the turns," he says.

There are currently six models available, including an off-road rough-terrain model. The retail prices for new models generally start at \$4,900, but used Segways generally can be found starting at \$2,000. Companies and organizations, including many police departments, also have purchased Segways.

As Roger describes the last quarter-mile stretch of his morning commute, he shares his vision from his memory.

"Cruising through the quiet residential neighborhoods with the fresh air and warm sun ... looking east with the sun rising behind St. John's Cathedral ... at just the right time in the morning, the light behind the steeple. ... It's really beautiful." He smiles and adds with a laugh, "It's cheaper than a convertible and a lot more fun." ■

Rick Singer Photography

1981 - Celebrating 27 Years - 2008



415 1/2 West Main Avenue
Spokane 99201 • 838-3333
ricksingerphotography.com
rick@ricksingerphotography.com

>>For more on Segways:

www.segway.com
<http://social.segway.com>
www.segwaychat.com