

Will Segway roll to profits?

Segway by the numbers

12.5
mph

Maximum speed

83
pounds

Weight

250
pounds

Rider payload

0

Turning radius

15
miles

Distance traveled on a single charge

East Valley entrepreneurs hope to ignite rental, sales business

The Segway Human Transporter was unveiled in 2001 with promises of transforming transportation.

Right now it's just an expensive novelty.

A couple of East Valley entrepreneurs want to build a business around those features — the novelty and the expense. In doing so, they may serve as bridges to getting society to adopt an ultimately useful technology.

Mike Shubic and Sean Hays, two guys with marketing backgrounds, started a company in Gold Canyon called the Green Carrot to rent a fleet of Segways for people who want to tour or just take a spin.

The two-wheeled vehicles have a top speed of 12 miles per hour and currently retail for about \$5,000.

"When the price falls to \$500, you will see Segways under the Christmas Tree," Shubic said.

The Green Carrot guys expect the Segway drop to that level in a



TOM GIBBONS
BUSINESS EDITOR

couple years. At that point, they hope to go into selling them.

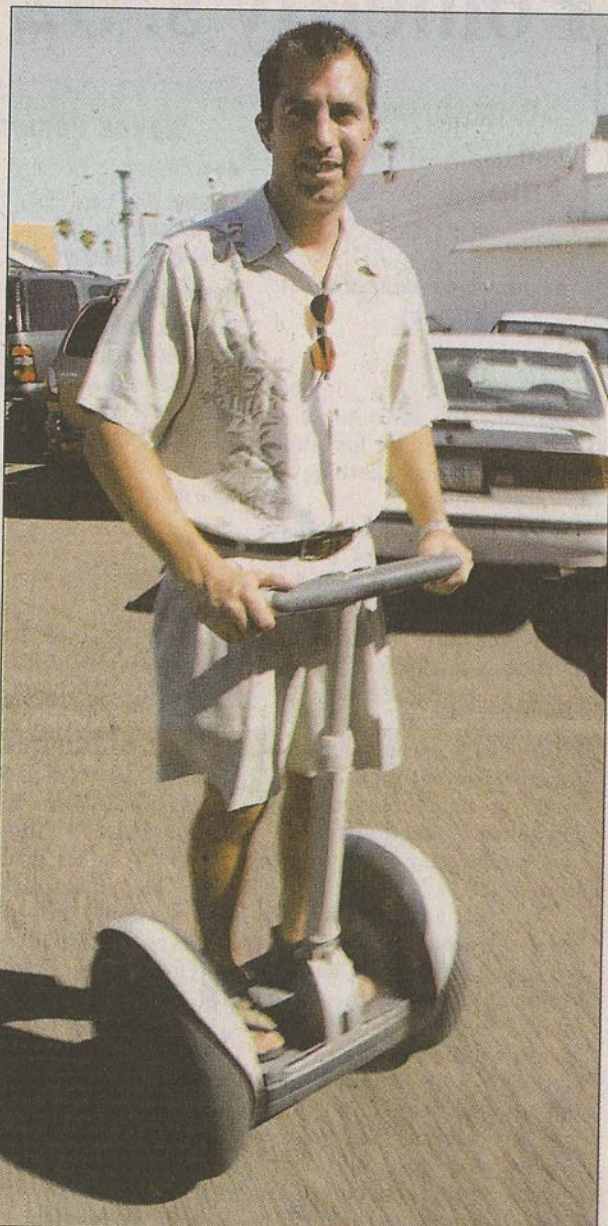
Right now the Green Carrot is taking Segways to festivals. They aim to open a shop on Mill Avenue in Tempe.

The Green Carrot brought a Segway by the Tribune last week. And I was favorably impressed.

For those of you who saw the pictures of our Commander and Chief taking a tumble on a Segway, Hays explains that the machine was actually turned off. When the Segway is off, it is almost impossible to balance on. When the machine is on, it's relatively easy.

"You want to avoid that move — we call it the 'W,'" Hays said.

Learning to ride the machine, which can go forward, backward and



ANDY SAWYER, TRIBUNE

ON THE MOVE: Mike Shubic of the Green Carrot shows off one of the Segways his company plans to rent.

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SEGWAY: Prices expected to drop

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turn on a dime, is less difficult than learning how to Hula Hoop. It was fun to ride. It runs on almost any surface — grass, a parking lot in need of repaving, and most impressive of all, the wrinkles and bumps in the Tribune newsroom carpet.

Segways draw attention wherever they go, Shubic said. An Associated Press reporter who used one for a week wrote that the Segway would be great tool for a single person to get noticed.

The jury is out as to whether the Segway has any other utility. Salt River Project is experimenting with meter readers using them.

The vehicles run on electricity and have a range of 12 to 15 miles.

Without companies such as the Green Carrot, the Segway might roll slowly into the dust bin of invention history, joining quadraphonic sound, motorized surf boards, the Apple Newton and laser discs. Actually, even with companies such as the Green Carrot, the Segway may wind up as a footnote in the saga of technology.

As in the case of the Apple Newton and the other

breakthroughs, the Segway is a concept with future possibilities. The problems with those commercially unsuccessful gadgets was they never had a present. Not enough people ever used the technology for it to come down in price, so more people could use the technology.

Ideas are not always judged

on merit. You know that saying about the mouse trap? Build a better one and the world will beat a path to your door.

If that were true there would be no marketing. Or pricing strategies. Or branding. Or any of the things beyond technology that make or break a product.

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