

Pedal patrol: MCT gives new bikes to APD

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - The Alton Police Department now has two additional bicycles to utilize for patrols, thanks to Madison County Transit (MCT).

MCT Managing Director Jerry Kane said the donation of two I-Force police bicycles, valued at \$3,200, was for two reasons. Primarily, Kane said the bicycle patrols will

make police more approachable by the general public. Secondly, Kane said MCT has developed more than 130 miles of bicycle trails throughout Madison County, and said the police should occasionally patrol those on their bikes as well.

Alton Police Deputy Chief Terry Buhs was at the Cyclery in Alton Friday morning to accept the bikes. The Cyclery assembled the bikes, and will cover maintenance on them throughout their duration on the force. Buhs agreed with Kane's assessment the bikes would make his officers much more approachable to the public.

"When the public sees officers on bike patrol, they are not as intimidated, and are more likely to come speak with them," Buhs said.

Kane said MCT spoke with other cities in the state about their bicycle police programs. He said Chicago's has been extremely successful. While in Chicago, he said two police officers were in their patrol vehicle with their windows down in the heat of summer, but the public still approached police on bicycles and asked them questions first. Kane said that was a testament to the bicycles' abilities to make police more approachable.

This year, the Alton Police Department has not utilized its bicycle patrols often, Buhs said. Excessive heat in earlier months as well as a lack of available manpower have contributed to this. With new officers being open for duty and cooler temperatures ahead, Buhs said cops on bikes will be a more common sight, especially in events at the amphitheater.

"We will probably have all four bicycles out with officers around during the Alton Expo," Buhs said.

Currently, Alton Police officers ride MCT buses around the town and patrol high-traffic areas on bikes, or they go to the bike trails around town and do it. Buhs said all patrols are two-person.

The new bikes have LED lights, sirens and a public address system. They also have packs on the back of each bike for battery chargers, water bottles, first aid kits and even trinkets to hand children who may be having a positive interaction with the police officers on bikes.

