

Two-wheel transporter will transform into smart sidekick

March 7 2018, by Nancy Owano



Credit: Segway

So what is the I-didn't really-need-it-but-how-do-you-spell-cool gadget would you like to buy next? A two-wheeled transporter to get around town? A personal assistant to order around town? No need to choose,

because, come May, you might get the two all in one.

San Francisco-based Segway Robotics has a new robotic scooter. What's so "robot" about it?

The scooter, Loomo, has smarts and sensors. You can ride it. Or, you don't have to ride it; it will follow you around and carry your extra bags home. And lest we forget. It will listen to your [voice commands](#) and on command can take pictures or videos for you too.

Loomo is a prototype and Segway Robotics has turned to Indiegogo for a campaign. It was made available for preorder on Indiegogo on Tuesday. Early bird pricing was set at \$1299.

It has an interesting draw as a combination of capabilities added to personal mobility. Think of it as personal two-wheel transporter and personal robot all in one. Or, as *Business Insider* remarked, a "\$1,300 rolling robot that carries your stuff."

It is a [transporter](#) with capabilities of seeing and hearing you, almost like a pet, said *Mashable's* Senior Tech Correspondent Raymond Wong. Similarly, a Segway Robotics' Li Pu, President, said, "what happens if you combine Segway's proven mobility technology with cutting-edge AI? Well say [hello](#) to Loomo."

Segway Robotics, in announcing its Loomo launch, also described it as a smart machine that toggles between a mini personal transporter and mobile robot sidekick.

Segway Robotics spokesperson Adam Bao demonstrated Loomo's ability to automatically follow owners in a video, one of the roles it can assume when the owner is not riding it for transport.

Wong said, "maybe you don't want to ride the Loomo or carry the 42-pound clunker home when it's running low on power. In such a situation, the Loomo could simply follow you home. " Another scenario is using it when heavy shopping bags need some help. Wong said, "just place two of them on the Loomo's foot pads and let it literally carry them home for you."

The machine has technology that can help it avoid obstacles, follow riders autonomously and identify owners and can take your picture on command.

The campaign page has a detailed list of components which include Intel RealSense ZR300 camera for depth sensing and motion tracking, 1080p HD-camera with 30Hz streaming and 104 degrees FOV for visual perception and photo/video capture; a 5-microphone array to determine voice/noise direction and recognize voice commands; sensors for obstacle detection and fall warning; touch sensors for enabling human-robot interaction and another method of control.

As a scooter, how is the ride? Troy Wolverton in *Business Insider* said that "It [rides](#) much like a Segway scooter; to get it to go somewhere, you simply lean in that direction." CNET's Patrick Holland: "The self-[balancing](#) scooter is much more robust and smooth to ride than a hoverboard." Holland tried one out.

Top speed is 11 miles per hour; you get up to a 22 mile range on a single charge. Wong said the wheels were "nice and thick and can easily ride up curbs and along sidewalks with issues."

Say "Loomo, transform" and the personal transporter changes into a personal robot. The same voice command transforms it back from robot mode to transporter.

("One cool feature: If you tell Loomo, "let's go," it will drive right up in front of you, turn around, then twist its screen head 90 degrees so you can get on board," Wolverton said.)

That transformation feature is what most excited Wong. "With a "Loomo, transform" voice command, the middle compartment flips around and springs to life to reveal a small 4.3-inch touchscreen with 800 x 480 resolution."

Troy Wolverton in *Business Insider* said the touchscreen display serves as both its face and interface for interactions. A circle on the screen looks somewhat like the device's eye. The eye indicates when Loomo is attentive to your voice commands, he said.

An accompanying smartphone app lets you remotely control the Loomo and drive it around.

The makers are opening the door for developers. Wolverton said, "The device runs a custom version of Android that Segway has already opened up to developers. The company plans to 'continuously' update the software and offer new apps for the device."

With the Android SDK, developers will be able to directly access Loomo's mobility and AI capabilities to build features or solutions.

But, why has Segway Robotics turned to Indiegogo and crowdfunding? What is their strategy?

"With our fully-formed production capabilities, we don't have any problems with getting products to you on-time. We're turning to crowdfunding to build up our core community of early adopters—developers, designers, and [creators](#) that'll help fully realize the vision of Loomo," they said on the campaign page.

The basic pack includes 1 Loomo, 1 AC/DC adapter, 1 extended air tap and 1 USB 3.0 Type-C cable. Loomo will begin shipping to backers in May 2018.

More information: www.indiegogo.com/projects/loomo-a-two-wheel-transporter-will-transform-into-smart-sidekick-mobile#/

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