

## Air hoses may deflate speed complaints in PSL

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PORT ST. LUCIE — The police department's most recent addition to its traffic enforcement arsenal works off air pressure and solar power.

Less obtrusive than a speed trailer with large, bright numbers, or a group of radar gun-packing officers, the four devices operate 24 hours a day and need no supervision.

The new device represents the latest police response to perennial gripes from residents about speeders and traffic scofflaws, said Officer Robert Vega, police spokesman, on Tuesday. In a past citizen survey, traffic-related issues were mentioned as a top concern.

"Port St. Lucie is one big traffic complaint," Capt. Don Kryak said. "With our growth and with the addition of cars every day, what we have to determine is whether these are valid complaints, and if they are, when do we target enforcement in that specific neighborhood."

The devices, which cost about \$7,000 for all four, use two air-inflated hoses stretched across a roadway. When a vehicle runs over the hoses, the speed is recorded in the solar-powered box, as well as the time, number of vehicles and vehicle type.

"If there's a speeding problem, then we can dedicate an officer or officers to that neighborhood at that specific time, thereby eliminating ... a waste of an officer being at the scene," Kryak said.

Police on Tuesday installed the devices at Paar Drive and Savona Boulevard in western Port St. Lucie as an initial test.

Officers have used similar devices in the past on roadways including Coral Reef Street, Sagamore Terrace and Lennard Road, but now have four of their own, officials said. The devices employed by officers earlier are owned by the city's traffic engineering department and weren't always easily accessible.

Sgt. Kacey Donnell said in using the devices earlier police learned that in many cases people have an exaggerated sense of how fast vehicles are going. The new devices can eliminate citizen complaints that motorists only slowed down because they saw officers in the area.

"In this case, you have something out there 24 hours a day measuring the speed — no visible officer — and we can download the information later and determine beyond a shadow of a doubt whether or not there's a speeding problem in the area," he said.

Donnell said they chose the Paar/Savona intersection as a test location because the area is somewhat isolated and because officers have received speeding complaints from there in the past.



Officer Kacey Donnell points to a solar-powered box, part of a new traffic-measuring device that police have placed at the corner of Paar Drive and Savona Boulevard in Port St. Lucie.