Idaho Transportation Department program will help commuters find options

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stopped traffic on Rte. 55 in summer 2015. An ITD program aims to help rural commuters find alternatives to using a single-occupancy vehicle. File photo.

The Idaho Transportation Department is hiring two outreach coordinators for a statewide project aimed at helping commuters leave their cars at home.

The one-year project is supported by a Federal Transit Administration program that targets rural areas. As such, it will examine not only conventional public transportation like buses, but will also look at ways to help people find vanpools, rideshares, and other alternatives to driving.

Although traffic congestion is commonly associated with larger cities, Kim McGourty, the grants and contracts officer for ITD, said she had heard from partners in cities like Twin Falls that rush hour does exist there. Commuters almost double the size of the city during the workday, she said. She noted a northern Idaho employer had started a vanpool program for employees. The ITD program would find ways to tell people about such opportunities.

“We’re just trying to give people more transportation options,” she said. “The coordinators will meet with employers and kind of promote different transportation options, and see if people are interested in finding alternative ways to commute to work.”

The grant runs from May through next April. One outreach coordinator will be responsible for the Lewiston and Moscow area, and will earn $75,480 for the year-long position. The second will be responsible for the Twin Falls, Magic Valley, Sun Valley, Pocatello and Idaho Falls area and will be $100,480 for the year’s work.

“It may seem like a lot, but when looking at the scope of work and previous milestones, it covers quite a lot, so we felt that was appropriate,” McGourty said. The Boise area will be covered by McGourty’s office and Ada County Highway District, she said.