Cabrillo officials are looking for funding to institute a RideSpring commuter program for the college.

Cabrillo seeks new funding sources for ride share program

College officials look to reinstate ‘RideSpring’

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APTOS — Cabrillo College officials are looking to reinstate RideSpring, a local ride share program, for its 14,000 students and 850 faculty.

Cabrillo applied in June for the AB2766 Grant Program. The application was rejected, but the college will reapply next year.

The grant, provided by the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, would allocate $4 per vehicle registration surcharge fee toward alternative transportation programs.

Cabrillo may additionally seek funding for RideSpring, which costs $84,000 per year, according to the program’s founder Paul McGrath.

Founded in 2006, RideSpring provides businesses software to coordinate carpooling opportunities, as well as $500 worth of monthly prizes from local businesses for those who carpool, bus or bike.

The college tried the program in 2008 to ease traffic, carbon emissions and commuter costs, said John Hendrickson, Cabrillo’s interim president.

About a quarter of the college’s staff and faculty signed up for the program during the three-month test period, he said.

“It was well liked, fun and easy to use, and best of all, effective,” he said in the 2013 grant application letter to Richard Steedman, district air pollution control officer for the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District.

“I discovered the gal down the hall lived half a block away from me,” said Judy Cassada, a Cabrillo employee. “I wouldn’t have even known that.”

Yet grant funding to permanently implement the program fell through.

In the wake of the 2008 recession, officials made budget cuts including discounted bus passes, which impacted the college’s mission to offer education to students who can’t afford going directly to a four-year institution, Hendrickson said.

“Transportation challenges are affecting our low-income students in particular, many of whom are in deep poverty,” Hendrickson said. “The ability to simply ‘get here’ threatens Cabrillo’s most basic commitment to open access.”

The program factors into the college’s goal, along with additional higher institutions, to reduce 80 percent of its carbon emissions by 2030, Cassada said. More than half of the college’s carbon emissions stems from transportation, she said.

“I’m sure for commuter colleges, that’s got to be the biggest impact,” Cassada said.

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