

Gov. Walker: Announces \$8 million in funding to address transportation needs of Wisconsin workers

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SUSSEX – Governor Scott Walker today announced the Commute to Careers program, an \$8 million multi-agency initiative that will support efforts statewide to eliminate transportation barriers for workers seeking to advance their careers or enter the workforce. The program will be funded by the Wisconsin Departments of Workforce Development (DWD) and Transportation (WisDOT).

“Given Wisconsin’s record low unemployment rate, it is more important now than ever to assist those who want to enter the workforce, but face transportation barriers to doing so,” said Governor Walker, who made the announcement at Quad/Graphics’ plant in Sussex. “This program will provide businesses and non-profit groups with resources to help people overcome those barriers so that no workers are left on the sidelines.”

The Commute to Careers program will be implemented in two phases:

\$8 million will be invested during the current biennium – \$3 million from WisDOT for transportation equipment and \$5 million in grants from DWD. The DWD grants will target the transportation needs of low-income workers, with at least \$1 million allocated to address the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities. An additional \$8 million in funding will be requested in the 2019-21 biennial budget – \$3 million in WisDOT funding for additional transportation equipment and \$5 million in DWD funding for continuation of the grant program.

“Many workers are facing obstacles getting to and from work, especially those who are financially challenged,” DWD Secretary Ray Allen said. “The ‘Commute to Careers’ program will enable us to establish strong public-private partnerships to address the needs of those workers and, in the process, grow the Wisconsin economy.”

The goal of the Commute to Careers program is to expand the pool of talent by connecting workers with affordable transportation to and from work or training programs. With Wisconsin’s unemployment rate in May repeating the record low of 2.8 percent set in April, this targeted, multi-phase approach will support the development of sustainable transportation solutions while utilizing existing state funding. Over time, private funding will replace public dollars, establishing a long-term network of transportation options that allow both rural and urban workers to reach training and employer sites.

“I am proud that Governor Walker challenged us to come up with a transportation solution for Wisconsin workers,” said WisDOT Secretary Ross. “Today’s Commute to Careers announcement fulfills that promise.”

Additional details about the program will be made available in a Request for Proposal that is expected to be released on July 23.