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Dealing with Canyon Congestion

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COTTONWOOD HEIGHTS, Utah (ABC4 Utah) The Mountain Accord wants the public's comments on how to deal with traffic up the canyons. During peak times Big, Little and Parleys Canyons are congested and it can cause serious problems.

In the short term, the Mountain Accord wants more people to carpool and ride buses while it conducts studies to deal with traffic.

"This problem is not going to fix itself and so the Mountain Accord is taking the lead on finding solutions we can implement immediately." Laynee Jones the Program Director of Mountain Accord.

To deal with the traffic from the Salt Lake Valley to Park City by using Interstate 80/Parleys Canyon, the Mountain Accord will conduct a \$400,000 study on buses.

"We need to study how we can get more people on that bus," said Jones. "So that is what this study is really about."

Jones adds there is a need for more buses, "We need more bus service in Parleys, we need more bus service in Big Cottonwood, we need more bus service in Little Cottonwood. We have dedicated a portion of the Mountain Accord budget to get more bus service in these canyons starting next year."

Utah Transit Authority Remi Barren told Good4Utah that it runs 25 buses each day up and down Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon including 54 round trips.

"This year we are already half way through the the ski season as you know and so there is not much we are going to be looking at this season. But next season we have additional dedicated bus routes," said Jones.

Barren told Good4Utah each bus used costs \$56,000 to operate. If funding is available UTA would look into providing the services immediately.

When asked if more buses should be running now, Nathan Rafferty with Ski Utah said, "Maybe that's a possibility. I know it certainly takes some hoops to jump through but the sooner the better."

Uinta-Wasatch-Cache U.S. Forest Service Supervisor David Whittekiend said traffic is a year-round problem.

"Traffic is a big issue. Yea, we do get a lot of people coming up and down these canyons and yeah, we do have visitation that is equivalent to Yellowstone National Park," said Whittekiend.

Another option to limit traffic in the Cottonwood Canyons would be for the U.S. Forest Service to

charge vehicles.

"We maybe looking at possibilities of fees," said Whittekiend. "If the Forest Service were to do something like that it would be similar to how we operate Mirror Lake Highway or American Fork Canyon under the Recreation Enhancement Act."

Ski Utah doesn't think that is necessary.

"We don't want to make it any more inconvenient for people so I think you are going to see us start with carpooling and bus solutions," said Rafferty.

If you would like to comment on traffic issues in the canyons and have a solution to the problem the Mountain Accord would like your input. You're asked to head to their website, <http://mountainaccord.com/> for more information.