



May 27, 2025 City Council Meeting

Title

HB Flex On-Demand Rideshare Pilot—Gerald Gatobu, Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation

Summary

Led by the City Council's Vision adopted in 2023, staff have developed a microtransit pilot program, HB Flex, to provide a new option for residents to get where they need to go. This on-demand, rideshare service operated by the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation allows residents to request rides within the designated pilot area through an app or website, free of charge. At the conclusion of the pilot, staff will assess ridership data and available funding to determine if HB Flex will become a permanent offering. This item will present an overview of the pilot and requires no action by City Council.

Fiscal Impact

The pilot is funded through a Demonstration Grant the City was awarded from the Department of Rail and Public Transportation. The grant amount totals \$440,000 and requires a \$110,000 match from the City.

Context & Analysis

City staff champion innovative ways to connect the community through public transportation. Led by the City Council's Vision adopted in 2023, staff have developed a pilot microtransit program, HB Flex, to provide a new option for residents to get where they need to go. This item will present an overview of the pilot and requires no action by City Council.

HB Flex, or Flex for short, is an on-demand, rideshare service operated by the Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation. Residents can use the Passio Go app or passiogo.com to request a ride from an HDPT vehicle within the designated pilot area. All the vehicles are ADA accessible, and rides during the pilot will be free, like the City's standard bus routes. This pilot began May 19th and will go through August 16th. Hours of operation will be 5am to 9am and 5pm to 11pm. HB Flex will operate in a predetermined service area that includes downtown, Valley Mall, and the Burgess Road shopping center.

Requesting a ride and interacting with the user interface is similar to that of other private services like Uber or Lyft. Once an account has been created, the rider then indicates the pickup and drop off addresses, the time they would like to be picked up, the number of riders, and whether they need ADA accommodations. The trip will be assigned to a driver, and the rider can track the vehicle's location as it makes its way to the rider. More detailed information can be found at <https://www.harrisonburgva.gov/bus-routes> and scrolling down until the section titled HB Flex.

At the conclusion of the pilot, staff will assess ridership data and available funding to determine if HB Flex will become a permanent offering, and whether service areas or hours should be expanded.