



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Gloucester County

Program Title: Bay Transit Express Service

Program Category: Transportation

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Quinton Sheppard

Title: Manager

Department: Community Engagement & Public Information

Telephone: 804-693-5730 Website: www.gloucesterva.info

Email: qsheppard@gloucesterva.info

### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Carol Steele

Title: County Administrator

Signature: 



**GLOUCESTER COUNTY**  
**Community Engagement &**  
**Public Information**  
6382 Main Street  
Gloucester, VA 23061  
(804) 693-5730  
[www.gloucesterva.info](http://www.gloucesterva.info)



**Virginia Association of Counties (VACo) 2023 Achievement Award Nomination**  
**Program: Bay Transit Express Service**

**Executive Summary:**

Bay Transit, the public transportation division of Bay Aging, enlarged the service zone of its popular Bay Transit Express ride hailing program last October and ridership has been rapidly increasing ever since. Gloucester County Government has helped partner with Bay Transit to market the Bay Transit Express, which is a shared ride service that picks up riders when they want and transports them safely and efficiently from Gloucester Point to the Gloucester Courthouse area. Using the free Bay Transit Express app, customers can securely and conveniently book trips straight from their phones and get picked up in minutes. Bay Transit Express operates Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 5 PM and rides throughout the expanded service zone are only \$1 per person.

Customers can pay using their debit or credit card securely stored on the Bay Transit Express app or pay in cash with exact change aboard the bus. All Bay Transit Express vehicles are wheelchair lift equipped and operated by Bay Transit's professional drivers. Customers without smartphones, or those who need to book through an agent, can schedule rides on Bay Transit Express by calling the Bay Transit Gloucester office at (804) 693-6977.

There has also been steady progress in encouraging new and existing Bay Transit Express riders to use the Bay Transit Express app. In January, over 53 percent of rides were booked through the mobile app. "We want to encourage everyone to download the free Bay Transit Express app on their smartphone," said Bay Transit Director Ken Pollock. "Not only is it incredibly convenient to use, but you will also get ten free rides after booking your first trip through the app," Pollock added. "We even have QR codes on the sides of the buses and on Bay Transit Express promotional materials that link directly to the Apple App Store or Google Play, for those with Android phones, to conveniently download our free Bay Transit Express app."

**Brief Overview:**

Bay Transit Express, the public transportation division of Bay Aging, is a ride hailing service operating in Gloucester, Virginia. Using the free Bay Transit Express app, customers can book \$1 trips straight from their phones, or call, to get picked up in minutes. Launched in June 2021 with one vehicle, the Bay Transit Express service zone was enlarged, and two additional vehicles were added, in October 2022. All Bay Transit Express vehicles are wheelchair lift equipped and operated by Bay Transit's professional drivers. Monthly rides taken on Bay Transit Express have nearly doubled since the expansion in October, setting an all-time record of 375 completed rides the week of January 30<sup>th</sup> through February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Since the express service expansion, over 400 trips have been taken by residents of Bay Aging's income-restricted Daffodil Gardens I and II senior apartments.

**Problem/Need Addressed by Program:**

Bay Transit's deviated fixed-route bus service in Gloucester sometimes required riders to wait at bus stops for up to 45 minutes. Fixed-route service was also not always door-to-door and posed problems for customers such as some residents of Bay Aging's Daffodil Gardens apartments, who cannot stand up for long periods of time. Operating costs for the fixed-route buses were also much higher than Bay Transit Express. Today, Bay Transit Express operates three buses in a service zone larger than the two discontinued fixed-route buses for less money and with superior customer access and satisfaction.

Customers pay using their debit or credit card securely stored on the Bay Transit Express app or pay the \$1 fare aboard the bus. All the vehicles are wheelchair lift equipped and operated by Bay Transit's professional drivers. Customers without smartphones, or those who prefer to book through an agent, can schedule rides by calling.

Since program inception, average wait times for Bay Transit Express have been 14.5 minutes or less. Riders have awarded the service an average ride rating of 4.9 out of a possible five stars. Monthly rides taken on Bay Transit Express have nearly doubled since the expansion in October.

### **Program Description/Innovation:**

Bay Transit, the public transportation division of Bay Aging, launched the new, state-of-the-art, on-demand public transportation service in the Gloucester Courthouse area on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Operating costs were initially funded through a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Mobility Innovations grant. In partnership with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT), and Via, a global leader in the provision and development of on-demand public mobility solutions, Bay Transit deployed one of only two micro-transit services in Virginia to serve a largely rural location. Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. (MEOC) was part of the Bay Aging Request for Proposals process, contracted with Via through Bay Aging, and continues to operate the only other rural micro-transit service in Virginia. The Bay Transit Express app is available for download on iOS (Apple) and Android devices. To ensure access for all riders, Bay Transit Express uses wheelchair accessible vehicles and allows for ride bookings for those without smartphones or who simply prefer to call, by calling Bay Transit's Gloucester office.

### **Program Costs:**

Operating costs were initially funded through a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Mobility Innovations grant. The expansion year is funded with Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) demonstration grant funds and local county matching funds. The operating costs for FY 22 were \$84,814. This included labor, fuel, maintenance and overhead. The hourly operating cost was \$37.39. The capital costs included the development of an app and monthly licensing for one year (\$110,000), and the acquisition of three lift-equipped Ford Transit vans (\$300,000). The capital costs are supported through FTA Federal 5311 and Virginia state transportation funds.

### **Program Outcomes:**

As referenced in the program costs section, Bay Transit Express has an hourly operating cost of \$37.39; nearly half that of the discontinued fixed-route lines. Concurrently, average wait times have ranged from as little as nine minutes to the current average of about 14.5 minutes since last October's service zone expansion. Ridership has surged, including among the residents of Bay Aging's two income-restricted senior apartments

in Gloucester. For Elizabeth Hence, and many other Daffodil Gardens residents who have taken hundreds of trips with Bay Transit Express, the service is a lifesaver. Customer satisfaction averages 4.9 out of 5 stars.

**Potential Replication:**

As Bay Aging and MEOC have demonstrated, AAAs with a public transportation division, or those working in close collaboration with the local transit system, can bring the convenience and improved customer experience of micro transit to their programs. Bay Transit, the Virginia Transit Association, and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT), have provided guidance on launching micro transit to several transit systems around Virginia. Similar resources are available to AAAs across the country. Via, and other micro transit technology companies, also have operational capabilities to provide vehicles and/or drivers in locations without existing public transportation resources.

**COVID Adaptation and Impact on Agency:**

Bay Transit operates fifty wheelchair lift equipped buses providing public transportation services to Virginia's Northern Neck, Middle Peninsula, and Charles City and New Kent counties. During COVID-19, Bay Transit implemented a myriad of safety protocols to protect bus drivers and customers, including on Bay Transit Express. To help people feel safe and comfortable, Bay Transit suspended all fare collection eliminating the exchange of money or fare media between drivers and riders. On every bus, Bay Transit installed plexiglass shields around the bus driver's seat, premium cabin filtration systems, plexiglass partitions between every passenger seat, cordoned off bus seats, limited ridership to ensure adequate social distancing, regularly cleaned and disinfected the buses, required all bus drivers to wear masks and provided hand sanitizer and/or face masks to any rider who needed them. Fare collection was reinstated in 2022, but several of these pandemic era safety protocols remain in effect today.

Looking ahead, Bay Transit is exploring replacing their fixed-route services in Tappahannock and West Point with the more cost-efficient and innovative micro transit service. This transition will allow riders, including the many seniors who rely on our buses, to enjoy shorter wait times, door-to-door service, and the convenience of on-demand scheduling.

Photo:

