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## NASHVILLE BUSINESS JOURNAL

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# Entrepreneur aims to fill niche for short trips with charter

Nashville Business Journal - by [Jenny Burns](#) Nashville Business Journal

Pilot Randy Harmon is starting Harmony Air, Nashville's first charter service for single-engine piston planes.

As the co-owner of the flight school at John C. Tune general aviation airport, he says he continually gets calls from business travelers who want to fly short trips to cities that it would take them a day to drive roundtrip.

But he hasn't been able to take them, unless they're training to be pilots.

"I get almost a call every week," Harmon says.

He's investing \$100,000 initially into the business and been working out the logistics with the **Federal Aviation Administration** for about two years.

The rising price of gas has played into Harmon's decision to launch the new business. While car fuel is nearing \$4 a gallon, airplane fuel is only about \$1.50 a gallon more and hasn't been rising as quickly in cost.

Harmon is targeting a niche market of small- to medium-sized business owners who are flying one to three people to nearby cities for meetings and returning the same day.

Harmony Air would charge about \$700 to \$900 for three people to fly roundtrip to Memphis or Knoxville on a Cirrus 22 or Diamond 40. The rate depends on the plane. The Cirrus goes faster and costs more.

Private small-jet charters will get there faster, but generally cost more than \$2,000.

John Black, executive director of the Smyrna Airport, says he thinks Harmon's found a "great niche."

"I would think there would be a market for that here as well as John C. Tune," Black says. Most of the other charters at Smyrna and around Nashville use multi-engine planes and carry about five or six people, Black says.



Photo Courtesy | Harmony Air  
Pilot Randy Harmon, who co-owns a flight school at John C. Tune airport, is starting a business that will offer charter services to nearby cities aimed at small- to medium-sized businesses.

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Potential customers also see the opportunity for growth with the charter service.

"If you need to go to Birmingham or Mobile in one day, you can't do that right now (on commercial flights)," says Jim Lackey, chairman and CEO of **Passport Health Communications**. "If you were able to have that flexibility at a reasonable price, that sure makes a lot of sense to us particularly if you have more than one person going."

"Most companies can't justify having their own plane and I think this is a good option," Lackey adds.

Harmon has eight airplanes lined up to use for Harmony Air, which has the tagline -- "In Tune with Your Travel Needs."

Most planes have leather seats and XM radio and some offer parachutes. Harmon says he hopes to start offering his first charter flights in June.

Charter companies have been growing as passengers become more frustrated with commercial airlines, says Steve Moore, senior vice president for AEG.

"It's about saving time," Moore says. "You can get some of your life back because of (missing) the airport bustle and shuffle."

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