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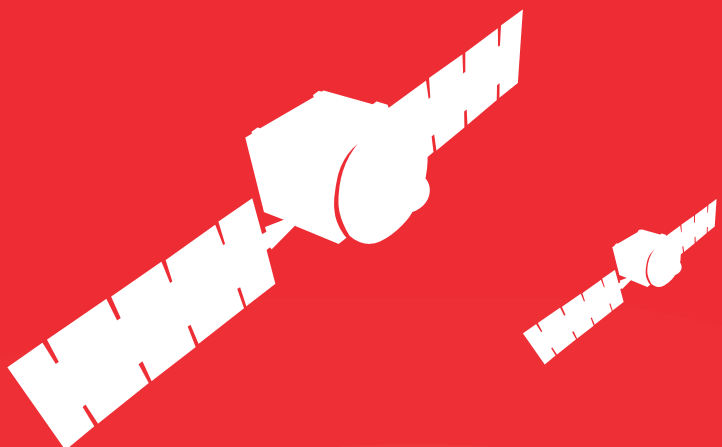
Wednesday  
23 October 2024

# FLIGHT DAILY NEWS

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## REIMAGINING INFLIGHT WI-FI



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The result is an 880-page document that stakeholders will be digesting for several weeks.

The SFAR will be in effect for 10 years, a period during which Whitaker says the FAA will "collect data and make adjustments as we go along". And it comes as companies such as Joby and Archer push to certificate with the FAA their electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft as soon as next year.

Whitaker, a former executive with Hyundai Motor Group's subsidiary Supernal, has made embracing the USA's wave of air taxi developers a priority since being unanimously confirmed as FAA administrator one year ago.

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Continued on page 4

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IS EASY





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## Electric take-off

FAA boss uses show to release rule for new class of AAM air taxis

**Howard Hardee**

Clearing the way for a new class of "powered lift" aircraft to get off the ground, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) yesterday released at the show a finalised rule outlining operational and pilot-training requirements for the burgeoning electric air taxi sector.

FAA administrator Michael Whitaker (pictured) signed the rule after speaking at the opening keynote session, with representatives from advanced air mobility companies such as Joby Aviation, Archer Aviation, Supernal

and Textron eAviation looking on.

The special federal aviation regulation (SFAR) ushers in the first entirely new category of civil aircraft since helicopters were introduced in the 1940s, the FAA says, opening the possibility of "wide-scale" operations of new and novel aircraft that incorporate elements of both rotorcraft and fixed-wing aircraft.

Powered lift vehicles now join fixed-wing aircraft and rotorcraft within the FAA regulatory framework.

"We now have a third category of aircraft for powered lift," Whitaker told reporters at the show. "This rule creates the operational system for advanced air mobility; it allows

operating rules and training rules to take effect for these new aircraft.

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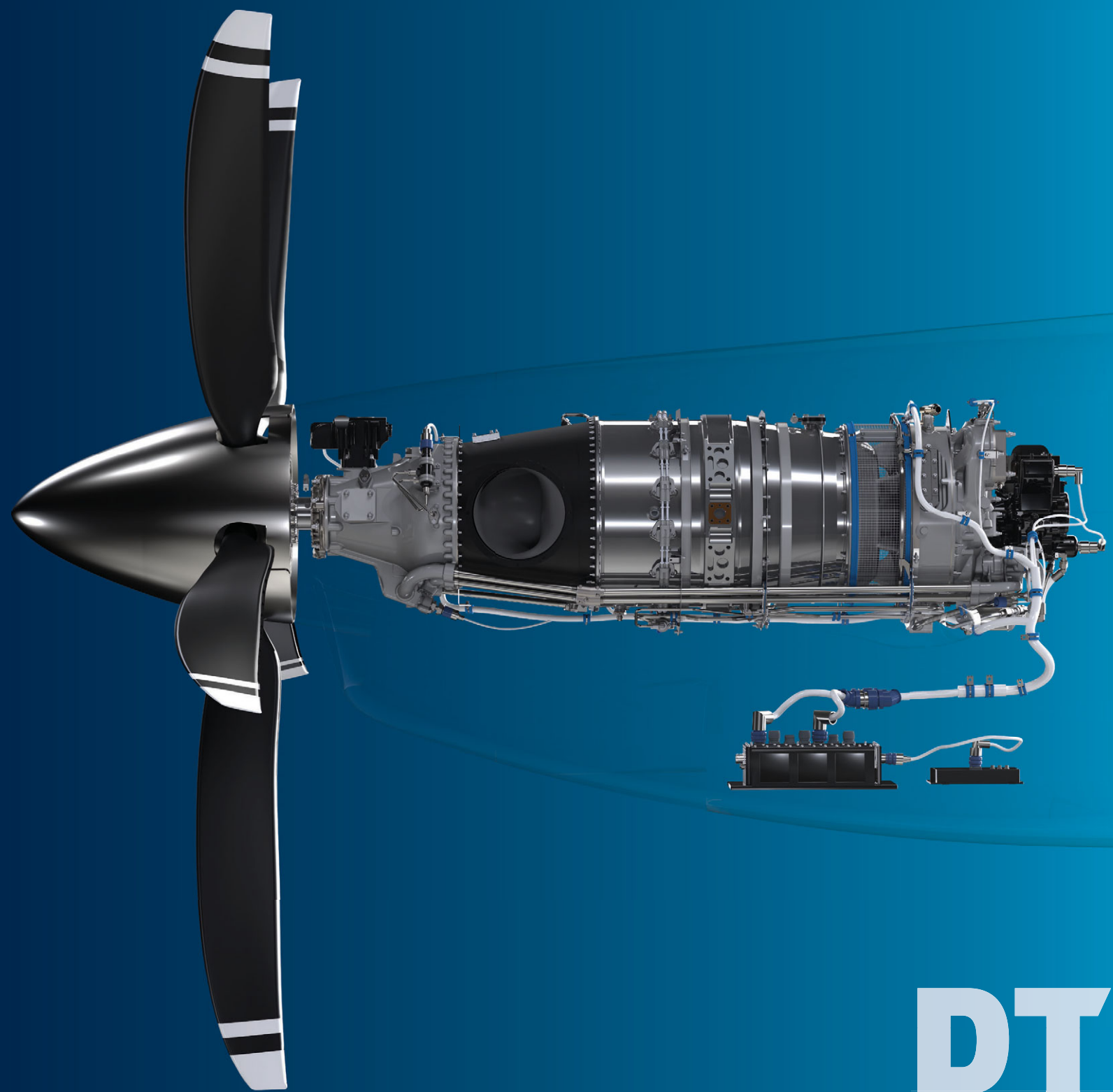


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# PT6

E-SERIES

Jon Hemmerdinger

Charter aircraft provider Wheels Up has secured fresh financing and revealed plans to replace its fleet of owned jets with used Embraer Phenom 300s and Bombardier Challengers.

The financially embattled Atlanta-based company will continue operating the Beechcraft King Air 350s turboprops that were traditionally the backbone of its fleet.

But it will simplify its operation by divesting all the jets it currently owns, including Citation CJ3s, Citation Excels, Citation X and Hawker 400XPs.

It will replace those with the incoming Phenom light jets and the Challenger super-midsize jets, with a goal of only owning those jet types within about three years.

"The transition to replacement aircraft types [known] in the industry for their best-in-class operational reliability will drive a step-change improvement in operational performance, efficiency and, in turn, an enhanced customer experience," Wheels Up chief executive George Mattson said at the show yesterday.

"My operating team cannot wait to get their hands on these aircraft and put them into service for our customers," he adds.

Wheels Up, which has

## Wheels Up to revamp jet fleet



Mattson: Enhanced customer experience

struggled financially in recent years, has signed a "binding agreement" to acquire for \$105 million all 17 Phenom 300s and 300Es operated by US company GrandView Aviation. It expects to close that deal in the fourth quarter of this year.

It will also acquire Grand-

View's maintenance programmes and integrate GrandView's pilots into Wheels Up's pilot pool.

Mattson calls the Phenom 300 an "ideal premium light jet for customers flying short- to mid-range trips", citing the type's capabilities and cabin comfort.

Those aircraft will re-

place Wheels Up's current 33 owned light jets, which include Citation CJ3s and Hawker 400XPs.

Mattson says Wheels Up is now seeking to "opportunistically acquire" a fleet of pre-owned Challenger 300s and 350s, either through leases or purchases. It expects to begin introducing

the Challengers in 2025.

"The Challenger 300 and 350 deliver a customer-centric experience with roomy, comfortable cabins, stand-up cabin height, flat floors, full galleys and much-larger dimensions than our current super-mid offering," Mattson says.

To make room for incoming Challengers, Wheels Up has already agreed to sell its 13 super-midsize Citation Xs to an unnamed buyer, but it intends to lease some of those Citations back.

Additionally, Wheels Up has signed deals with Gogo Business Aviation to equip the incoming Phenoms and Challengers with Gogo's Galileo HDX satellite-based wi-fi.

"Both of these aircraft types have large installed bases and correspondingly large secondary markets for pre-owned aircraft, which enable an earlier transition of our fleet to these aircraft types over the next few years," Mattson says.

Additionally on 22 October, Wheels Up said it secured \$332 million in new credit from Bank of America, with Delta Air Lines - which owns about 40% of Wheels Up's stock - providing credit support.

Wheels Up went public with high expectations in 2021 amid a booming business aviation market. The company has since struggled as the market has cooled, losing \$194 million in the first half of 2024.

## Charging forward

Atlantic Aviation is preparing to install charging stations at its East 34th Street heliport in New York City to support electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) operations. The company has also extended its concession agreement with the city authorities for five years. The heliport is a key hub for helicopter flights into Manhattan including those for the neighbouring Langone Health Center. Atlantic says the development will include combined charging system (CCS) and global electric aviation charging system (GEACS) stations. The aviation services company is working with Beta Technologies, Joby, and Archer to "understand aircraft needs and adapt the site for eVTOL operations". It expects to complete the project "in time to align with early eVTOL entry into service dates".

## Never lose your curiosity

Rather than focusing his humorous science-education efforts on younger generations, celebrated astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson concerns himself with "adults who have lost any sense of curiosity about this world, who become ossified".

"I'm not worried about the youth," deGrasse Tyson (pictured) told NBAA keynote attendees in a standing-room-only conference hall on the show's opening day. "Kids are born curious. Curiosity is something we lose."

He encouraged adults in the room to learn continuously - and set an example for younger people who may someday engage with the business aviation industry. "I'm focusing on adults that have lost sight of what it is to wonder, to be curious about the moving frontier of civilization."





# Stick with us

Financially vulnerable eVTOL developer Lilium urges investor patience

Borel: We are really close and we need everyone to jump with us

Jon Hemmerdinger

The chief commercial officer of German electric aircraft developer Lilium is urging investor patience as the company seeks additional financing after recently losing a German loan guarantee.

Sebastien Borel insists Lilium is closing in on achieving certification for its electric vertical take-off and landing aircraft Lilium Jet, having already completed much of the programme's difficult work.

"My message to investors is, we're really close and we need everyone to jump with us, to make it happen," Borel said at the show yesterday.

"The executive team is working hard right now

to... get more funding and to find solutions."

It comes after news broke that the German government denied Lilium a €50 million (\$54 million) loan guarantee, casting doubt about the financial solvency of a company that has already raised \$1.5 billion in financing.

"We're going to need to raise more, and we're working on that solution right now," says Borel. "Having a German government [guarantee] would have been [a]... great signal to investors, but we're working on different avenues right now to fix it."

Borel says Lilium has made enormous progress in developing its 4-6-passenger Lilium Jet, an aircraft the company insists can transform regional air travel. It is now manufacturing three aircraft it plans to use for flight testing, which it hopes to start early next year. The manufacturer

aims to have the Lilium Jet certified in 2026 and to produce the type in Germany and a yet-to-be-decided US site.

Borel says "most" of the work preceding certification has already been completed and that the company has settled on Lilium Jet's means of complying with European regulations. Also, the Federal Aviation Administration today finalised its electric air taxi operating and pilot-training rules, meaning Lilium and competing electric aircraft developers can now work toward US compliance.

"The industry believes in Lilium, believes in our products. We have detailed unit economics of the aircraft. We have demonstrated what it can do in performance," Borel says. "We are very close to... first flight and then to enter into service."

Continued from page 1  
was prescribed in the FAA Reauthorization [Act of 2024], is a testament to the leadership now at the FAA," says Sam Graves, a US congressman who serves as co-chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

"When you add a new entrant into the airspace, there's always going to be complications, but we need to do this in a timely manner," Graves says.

"We need to do it in a safe manner, and that's what the goal here is."

Rick Larsen, a congressman from Washington and

sitting member of the transportation committee, calls Whitaker's signing "a key step in allowing the United States and the aviation industry in the US to safely scale and create jobs, to remain a global leader in aviation safety and innovation."

Electric aircraft developers applauded the rule's finalisation, including Vermont's Beta Technologies, which is developing both eVTOL and conventional take-off and landing variants of its Alia aircraft.

Last year, FAA test pilots went through ground school to learn how to fly Beta's Alia aircraft, then flew along-

side a Beta test pilots in evaluation flights

"It's an important and encouraging step for the industry," says Kristen Costello, Beta's regulatory affairs lead. "We look forward to reviewing it in depth and working alongside our customers to operationalise it."

California's Archer notes that the rule "comes ahead of schedule, incorporates key feedback from across the industry and is yet another foundational element toward our goal of the US leading the way in commercialising" air taxi operations.

"We'll continue to formulate our operational plans

to align to this final rule," Archer says.

The SFAR does not specifically address operational challenges for electric air taxis such as flying into known icing conditions, Whitaker says, explaining that those aircraft will be subject to the "same set of rules that apply to all aviation".

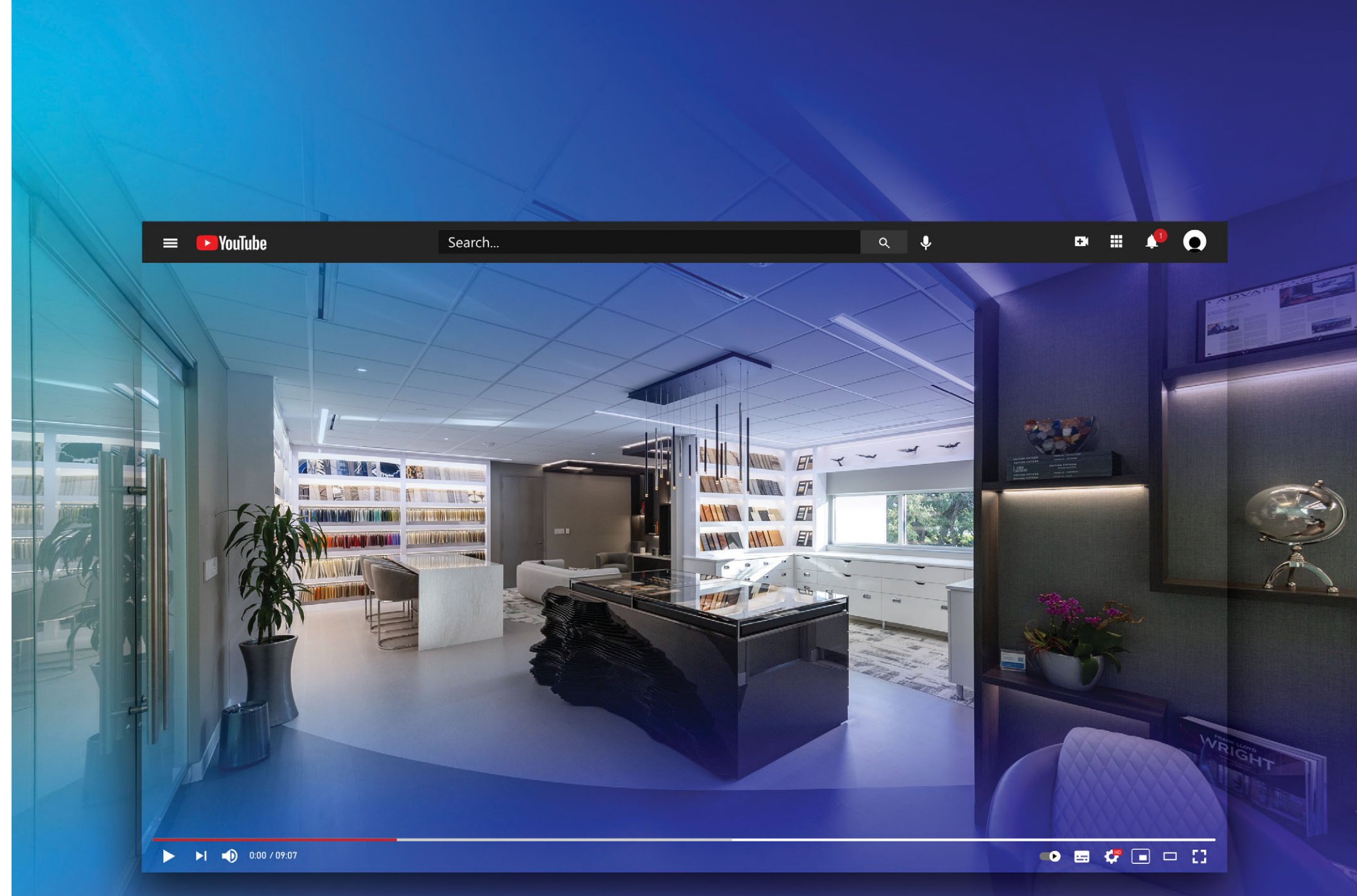
"This is basically taking all the global operating rules and making adjustments where the technology requires," he says. "Whether it's IFR, VFR or icing conditions, the basic rule structure stays the same."

Certification remains a

major hurdle for start-ups proposing to commercialise eVTOL operations this decade, and the viability of those business models is another question.

"One of the challenges with advanced air mobility is that we don't know where that business model is going to go," Whitaker says. "Is this going to be three-minute departures to the airport? Is it going to serve rural areas and tie them into urban areas? Is it some other sort of missions we haven't even thought of yet? We need to have the flexibility to allow these businesses to succeed [and] do so safely."

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Simmons: We have high expectation for VisionJet in the professionally flown sector



# Cirrus's bold Vision for corporate market

Vegas to Phoenix, Arizona in 1h. "The operating economics of a single-engined jet are very attractive compared with a twin turbine such as a Beechcraft King Air, Cessna Citation M2 or Embraer Phenom 100," he says.

Cirrus also boasts a growing global service centre network for the VisionJet with 55 of its 200-strong facilities offering full-service and support for the six-seat aircraft.

Simmons points to the aircraft's pressurised cabin, Cirrus Airframe Parachute System and its Safe Return automatic landing system. "We are covering all safety bases," he says.

Of the 325,000 flight hours flown by the VisionJet fleet to date, the Safe Return system has not been activated all the way to the ground, while the CAPS system has been used only twice, Simmons says.

The VisionJet is now in its third iteration. The first-generation model, of which there are 120 examples, was replaced in January 2019 with the G2 which introduced the Safe Return feature. Nearly 200 models were delivered. The latest version, called the G2+ entered service in July 2021 with wi-fi and enhanced take-off and landing performance. "There are 335 G2+ examples in service and the fleet is growing rapidly," says Simmons.

Cirrus delivered 93 VisionJets in 2023 and expects to hit around 100 aircraft shipments this year. Priced at \$3.3 million, the backlog for the VisionJet is around 24 months.

Kate Sarsfield

Cirrus Aircraft has returned to NBAA BACE to drum up interest of its VisionJet in the corporate and aviation market.

Todd Simmons, Cirrus president customer experience, describes the market for the single-engined personal jet as "bullish".

"We have high expecta-

tions for the VisionJet in the professionally flown aircraft sector as there nothing else like it on the market," Simmons says. The world's first single-engine jet is approaching 600 aircraft deliveries and 1,300 type-rated pilots.

The milestone VisionJet shipment is scheduled for the end of the fourth quarter, six years after the first example entered service.

Simmons says 80% of the owners are private flyers,

while the remaining aircraft are in service with "professionally flown" operators such as small corporates, regional operators and business owners.

"We are keen to grow these markets," says Simmons. "The aircraft is well suited to the charter market for example, and while we have had some success here the operations are very disparate at the moment. It would be great to have a

fleet order."

The Williams FJ-33-powered VisionJet is "ideal" as a stand-alone platform or to complement an existing fleet, Simmons adds. It has a range of 1,000nm (1,850km), at a cruise speed of 310kt (575km/h) and flight level 310.

It covers lots of regional missions, notes Simmons, such as Knoxville, Tennessee to Chicago and Washington DC in 1h 15min and Las

## MedAire presented with Henderson Trophy

Medical and security assistance specialist MedAire has been presented with this year's National Aeronautical Association Henderson Trophy, which is awarded to "a living individual, group of individuals, or an organisation whose vision, leadership or skill made a significant and lasting contribution to the promotion and advancement of aviation and aerospace" in the USA.

"We are deeply honored to receive the prestigious Clifford Henderson Trophy," says Bill Dolny, chief executive of MedAire.

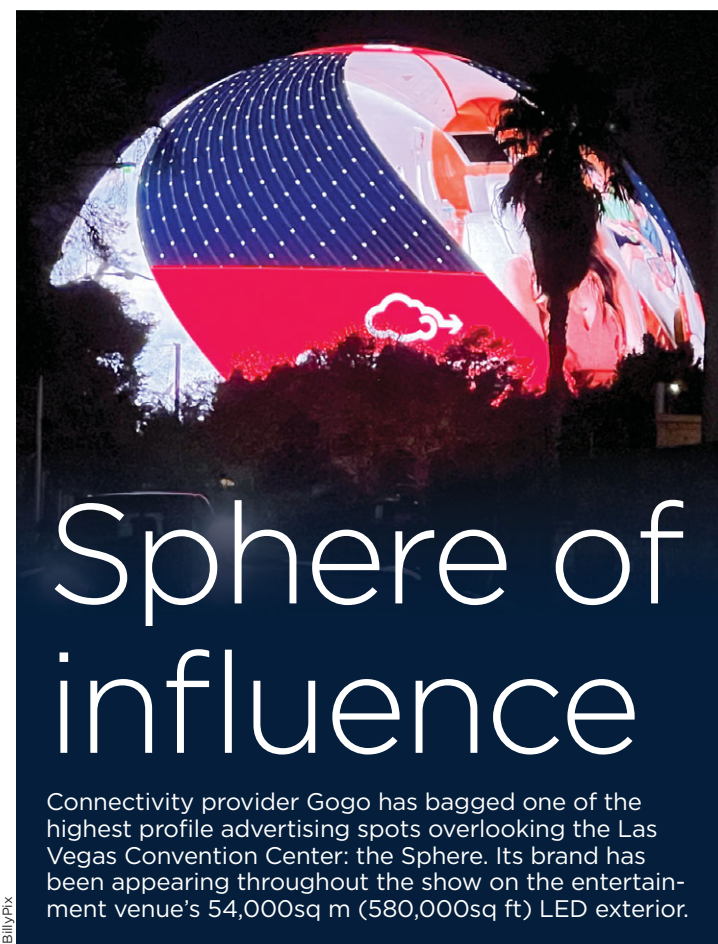
"MedAire's founder, Joan Sullivan Garrett, was the pioneer of in-flight medical response solutions, developing MedLink, and advancing medical kits on board thousands of aircraft. We continue to build upon her legacy, striving to elevate safety and health standards for travelers worldwide."



Dolny and Sullivan Garrett with the award

The Henderson Trophy, founded in 1960, is named after Clifford Henderson, an enthusiastic aviation

proponent. Nominees are proposed by the NAA president and approved by the executive committee.



## Sphere of influence

Connectivity provider Gogo has bagged one of the highest profile advertising spots overlooking the Las Vegas Convention Center: the Sphere. Its brand has been appearing throughout the show on the entertainment venue's 54,000sq m (580,000sq ft) LED exterior.

BillyPK

Clark: Unlocking the US market



BillyPK

## Jet Aviation breaking ground at Opa Locka

Business aviation services provider Jet Aviation has broken ground on an FBO and hangar facility at Miami-Opa Locka executive airport in Florida.

The facility will feature two large hangars, and on-site US Customs and Border Protection.

The 27-acre facility will be situated on the west side of the airfield and feature a 790sq m (8,500sq ft) terminal, and over 50,000sq m of ramp space.

In addition, two 1,860sq m private use hangars will be constructed.

"Adding Miami to our network is key to further strengthening our footprint in the US," says David Best, senior vice-president regional operations Americas and APAC. "We are committed to growing in locations where our customers want us to be. Florida is an important destination for business aviation and we are excited to continue the legacy of seamless service that we have built in Palm Beach since 1985."

# Take-off closer than you think, vow eVTOL chiefs

Jon Hemmerdinger

Developers of small electric aircraft say they are closer to making their visions a reality than observers might realise, having already demonstrated the operating capabilities and economic feasibility of their designs.

Speaking at a session on the opening day of NBAA BACE, executives with several start-ups also expressed fresh optimism

about US opportunities after the Federal Aviation Administration finalised its air taxi operating and pilot-training rules.

"Awesome to have some amount of clarity on how we are going to operate these things," Kyle Clark, chief executive of US electric regional aircraft developer Beta Technologies said during a panel discussion.

"It's a great sign. It's going to be unlocking, really, the US market," Lilium chief commercial officer Sebast-

ien Borel adds of the FAA's rule, which the agency's administrator signed yesterday at the show.

Operators and investors are now "going to be looking at a concrete piece of paper and know what they are facing," Borel adds.

Beta's Clark says his company has already tested its electric aircraft in high-frequency operations, having flown "92 missions, 200 sorties and 1,000 take-offs and landings" at Eglin Air Force base.

"Does that count as our first day of service?" he says.

Jeff Foland, chief executive of fixed-based operator Atlantic Aviation, notes that electric charging facilities are increasingly becoming widely available. Three of Atlantic's facilities already have charging capabilities, and the company plans to introduce the equipment at many more of its sites.

"Day one... We are past that point," Foland says. "It's picking up pace. It's going."

### In brief...

#### Correction

In Tuesday's edition of *Flight Daily News*, we wrongly suggested that Honda Aircraft's under-development Echelon light jet would supersede the HA-420. We are happy to confirm that this is not the case, and production of both aircraft will take place in parallel.

## Elvis comeback

A Las Vegas favourite has returned to NBAA BACE. Elvis - or at least someone who looks very like him - is available for selfies on A1 FBO's stand. Hurry, before he leaves the building.

"There used to be a lot of Elvis Presley impersonators at the show, but we haven't seen one for a while, so we thought we'd bring one back to emphasise our offer of old-style service with modern technology," says A1 FBO vice-president of sales and marketing Monica Sarduy.

The company offers FBOs a suite of software products, including fuel management, flight tracking and inventory management. It supplies around 250 customers worldwide.

Co-founder and chief executive Jim Wiley, a former line service technician with FBO chain Landmark, set up the company with a colleague from an IT background, harnessing his experience in the aircraft handling sector.



The King with the A1 FBO team

BillyPK

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Henderson Executive Airport Booth AD108



## PC-24 goes green with F/List

Gradwohl: We breathe innovations 24/7

### Kate Sarsfield

Austrian interiors company F/List has teamed with Pilatus Aircraft to showcase a PC-24 cabin cross-section featuring a range of its luxury sustainable materials.

The mock-up of the superlight business jet, on display at the static, features current bio-based materials from the F/List portfolio alongside its latest addition – a plant-based natural oil varnish. Pilatus is the first airframer to adopt this product.

Anita Gradwohl, F/List group director, customer relations and sales, emphasises the importance of creating sustainable products for the aircraft cabin.

“The aviation industry is in the spotlight, often being cited as one of the planet’s biggest pollutants. We must take responsibility not only in our words but in our actions for our impact on the planet. We are determined to do our part in the interi-

ors sector,” she says.

The natural oil is latest product in F/List’s expanding portfolio. Unlike the typical synthetic products on the market, the natural oil minimises the release of harmful volatile organic compounds into the environment “while enhancing the grain and beauty of wood veneers”, says Gradwohl.

The oil finish is durable, scratch and stain-resistant, and needs minimal maintenance.

The PC-24 mock-up on display features a contemporary cabinet, sidewalls, bulkhead and side ledge, all of which incorporate samples from F/List’s sustainable materials portfolio including recycled stonedust, mother of pearl, leather and marble remnants.

Andre Zimmermann, Pilatus Aircraft’s vice-president of business aviation, says the airframer always seeks to improve its customer offering and reduce its environmental footprint “without compromising quality or performance”.

Through the collaboration with F/List “we are realising our commitment to sourcing effective products that reduce our carbon footprint, maintain our familiar aesthetic and support efficient operations by being durable, hygienic and easy to maintain,” says Zimmermann.

Pilatus is one of F/List’s key business aircraft customers with the Thomasberg-based company having delivered 1,100 cabin shipsets for the PC-24 and PC-12 single-engined turboprop to date. F/List also supplies interior parts to the other leading airframers including Bombardier, Dassault, Embraer and Textron Aviation.

“We breathe innovations 24/7,” says Gradwohl. “We hope to offer to our OEM customers a range of cabin structures built from sustainable materials. The demand for environmentally friendly products is growing among business aviation customers and we need to remain five-steps ahead to produce innovative and attractive products to meet their needs.”



## Funding boost for CAN

Phillips 66 Aviation yesterday presented a \$23,460 cheque to the Corporate Angel Network, a charity that arranges free flights for young cancer patients and their families to treatment centres on business jets with spare seats. Since 2010 Phillips has contributed over \$280,000 to CAN. Pictured is Robert Stangarone, chief executive of CAN (centre), with representatives from CAN and Phillips.

## Universal Weather lands in Portugal

Universal Weather and Aviation has unveiled a strategic partnership with Safeport, a Portuguese business aviation ground handler. It marks the Houston-based flight planning specialist’s first foray into the Portuguese market, which includes the African country of Cape Verde.

As part of the arrangement, all six of Safeport’s locations will be cobranded with Universal Aviation. They are Lisbon, Cascais, Oporto, Beja, Faro, and Sal Island on Cape Verde, a strategic fuel stop for transatlantic flights, and increasingly popular tourism destination.

“Portugal’s thriving business aviation market, coupled with Cape Verde’s strategic importance for Atlantic crossings, presents a unique opportunity for growth,” says Greg Evans, chairman of Universal.

“Safeport was the clear choice for this partnership due to their exceptional 30-year track record of top-tier service and deep local expertise. Their proven ability to handle high profile clients—such as top executives, government officials, and celebrities—aligns perfectly with our commitment to delivering the highest standards of service and safety globally.”

Paulo Mirpuri, president and chief executive of Safeport, adds: “Forming an alliance with Universal Aviation allows us to elevate our three decades of local expertise to a global scale.”

Pictured left to right: Bernardo Pinheiro of Safeport, Adolfo Aragon, Catherine Evans, Claudia Evans and Greg Evans of Universal, Pedro Duarte of Safeport, Sarah Evans, Ralph Vasami, and Charlie Mularski of Universal.



# JetXP a hit with trial customers

Graham Dunn

Satellite communications specialist Viasat is yielding the benefits of acquiring fellow network provider Inmarsat as it receives positive feedback from initial trials of an enhanced in-flight connectivity programme for business aviation, called JetXP.

Under the initiative unveiled earlier in October, Viasat says its Jet ConneX customers are the first to benefit from major performance improvements on selected plans, including uncapped speeds, expanded capacity and increased network prioritisation.

Viasat business area global director Claudio D'Amico points to a positive response to the JetXP trial, which encompasses hundreds of customers.

"We collaborate with our distribution partners,

Collins, Honeywell, Satcom Direct, and they've been getting a lot of positive feedback," he says.

"What we are trying to do with this campaign is drive the interest from customers in the market to have those conversations with our distribution partners," D'Amico adds. "But from the original trials of the customers that have been using it, I think the feedback has been very positive."

Viasat completed its acquisition of Inmarsat last year. D'Amico points to the joint experience the firms have in the satellite connectivity industry.

"A lot of customers are looking for a consistent and reliable experience, and JetXP is that," he says. "It is a way for us to consistently deliver connectivity capability for our customer base, and focus on the things that are important."

"One of the things we have learned is that speed

itself is not as important, [as] it is about how can you deliver a consistent experience in areas where you have a lot of customers and a lot of jets. Being able to support that consistently is what makes that overall experience great."

Viasat describes JetXP as "an important step" in harmonising its business aviation service offering and network-management strategy following its acquisition of Inmarsat.

"When you think about the cultures both companies have, I think there are a lot of similarities and those things helped us come together as a team," D'Amico says, when asked about the progress of the business combination. "The fact we were both leaders in the markets we played in within business aviation has helped us a lot, as well."

"We are making progress. It's exciting and there is a lot more to come."

D'Amico: Customers are looking for a consistent and reliable experience



BillyPik

De Looz: Reconciling areas that have traditionally been siloed

# MySky right on schedule

Aviation expense management platform MySky has returned to NBAA BACE to debut its aircraft scheduling platform for US Part 91 operators.

The tool was acquired earlier this year from Satcom Direct - which it operated under the Pre-flight Post brand.

"The sale was completed last month and we have now integrated the programme into the MySky financial services portfolio - Spend, Quote, Budget, Tax and Procure - operating under the Scheduler branding," says Jean De Looz, MySky's head of Americas. "We view this tool as an extension of

our commitment to bringing cutting-edge financial services and operational efficiency to the aviation industry."

He says the company is "reconciling operating data and financial data. These areas have traditionally been siloed in the business aviation market".

MySky Scheduler downloads the data directly from the aircraft's flight management system. This eliminates the need for post-flight manual data input from crews and operations departments which De Looz says "is susceptible to human error, often resulting in poor quality data".

As an extension of the digital capability, the data is then usable by the platform's other services that inform predictive maintenance strategies. MySky Scheduler can integrate with over 25 platforms, thanks to its open application programming interface.



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GE Aerospace

— We were meant to fly.

# Universal draws on AI to prevent incursions

Kate Sarsfield

Universal Avionics is demonstrating an enhanced runway collision avoidance system (EVS) that builds on ADS-B In positioning reporting with artificial intelligence-infused video content analysis and voice recognition.

The feature was a winning concept from Universal's internal competition – called the 2023 Grand Challenge – which sought to exploit, create and implement AI technology through the Universal product lines.

This competition winner uses external camera inputs, audio capture and ADS-B In information to paint a picture for the pilot of the situation at the airport while taxiing. The AI system exploits Universal's Federal Aviation Administration-certified Aperture visual management system, which delivers video inputs and imagery to flight deck displays, including Universal's Sky-



Yahav: Augmented reality experience

Lens head-wearable display.

"This system builds on ADS-B In for complete visual and voice assistance, simplifying aircraft operations and helping to prevent runway incursions – for which there were 1,700 last year in the USA alone," says Universal.

The "augmented reality experience", combined with object and speech recognition, enables new features

including visual positioning, obstacle detection, taxi guidance, and traffic awareness, says Universal chief executive Dror Yahav. "This empowers operators to make proactive decisions with intuitive real-world information while improving pilot safety in the air and on the ground.

"Instead of translating 2D screens into real-world situations, critical information is

integrated into the pilot's vision, augmented into the real world while looking outside the cockpit," Yahav explains.

He describes AI's potential to the aviation industry as "immense".

"There is room for improvement of functionality across all of our product lines... and we are incorporating this AI-infused voice recognition and video

content analysis technology throughout," he adds.

AI is being applied to Aperture through image content analysis. "We are training the system to identify objects in the EVS image and then, based on that, provide alerts to pilots," says Yahav. "The more data we have, the better we are able to offer new functionality and more accurate services."

Universal Avionics is "committed to making flying safer, and by leveraging disruptive technologies we can help pilots focus more on their outside surroundings, limiting distractions and increasing safety", Yahav adds.

The AI video content analysis and voice recognition features will be available for retrofit across the Universal product lines which the company expects to add many years to an aircraft's lifespan.

"Our integrated systems and connected cockpit work to modernise ageing aircraft and overcome challenges from outdated avionics," says Yahav.

## Textron's Gogo first

Textron Aviation has selected the Gogo Galileo HDX connectivity system for factory installation on the Cessna Citation Longitude, Latitude and Ascend, boosting the in-flight wi-fi capabilities of those business jets.

The planned integration of Gogo's low-earth orbit satellite-based service will make Textron Aviation the first business aviation OEM to offer the technology as an option on new aircraft.

"This configuration makes Gogo Galileo more affordable and easier to install and operate than other satellite systems currently available," Textron Aviation says.

The system is expected to be available on the Longitude from early 2026, with the Latitude and Ascend to follow.

# Noises off for Bose

Now celebrating its 60th year in business, Massachusetts audio company Bose has returned to this year's NBAA event to showcase its noise-cancelling pilot headsets.

The company that helped popularise "active noise cancellation" technology is displaying its A30 and ProFlight Series 2 headsets at its booth on the show floor.

The headphones have microphones that pick up ambient noises and a system that then muffles them by creating sounds at an "inverse wavelength", explains Bose business development manager Chris Wuerfl.

The headsets are used by pilots of various aircraft types. The A30 around-ear headset has better "passive attenuation" than the in-ear ProFlight Series 2, making the A30 better suited for pilots flying propeller aircraft and other relatively louder types.

The ProFlight Series 2, introduced about four years ago, is "ideal for a quieter



Sound investment: Wuerfl demonstrates the company's latest headphone technology

platform", like jets, says Wuerfl. "When you are in a quieter environment you don't need as much noise attenuation".

Pilots can adjust the noise-cancelling function between low, medium and high settings, and can tap on the headphones to switch immediately to the

low setting – useful when, for instance, speaking with passengers, says Wuerfl.

The baseline ProFlight Series 2 costs \$995, though Bose sells a Bluetooth-capable variant for \$1,045. That technology allows the headset to connect to any Bluetooth-capable device. The A30 costs \$1,299 for

either the baseline or Bluetooth model.

Amar Bose founded the company 60 years ago and was inspired to develop the noise-cancelling technology after experiencing, during a transatlantic flight years ago, the shortcomings of the pneumatic headphones then commonly used by airlines.

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Voight: Economical way for aircraft owner to refresh interiors and get latest technologies

# Collins delivering updated Venue

Graham Dunn

RTX unit Collins Aerospace has carried out first deliveries of its new upgraded Venue cabin management system. The enhanced Venue features Collins' new smart monitors and upgraded graphical user interface (GUI), updating entertainment options and the usability of the system. Collins Aerospace vice-president and general manager of business and regional avionics Nathan Voight says: "We have deliveries out in the field now. There are over 1,700 Venue systems out in the market today, so a really strong installed base. Our new updated Venue is an avenue to refresh those that are already installed, but also to

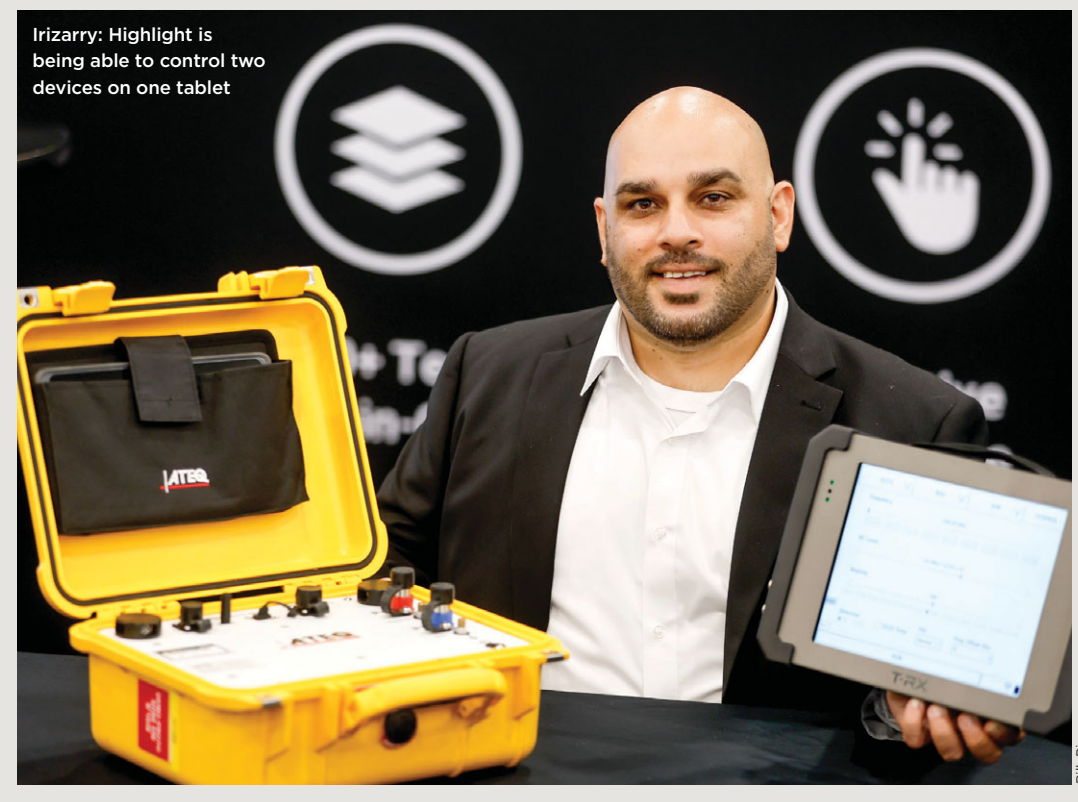
address new cabin management systems for aircraft coming into service." The updated system includes new smart monitors which provide better resolution, different size options and upgrades the in-flight entertainment experience. Collins launched the new smart monitor, which can function as a standalone IFE solution or fully within the Venue cabin management system, in March this year. Venue also delivers a streamlined architecture and new interface. "We have taken a lot of enhancements from a GUI standpoint that make it easy for someone to navigate the menus, [and] made it icon-based, so it's common with other applications they are interacting with on a regular basis. So the experience you have in the cabin is consistent with

your experience at home." Collins also flags that embedding smart technology and a robust processing platform helps simplify future software updates while facilitating the integration of Collins' IFE products, such as the Airshow moving maps. "That makes it really scalable," says Voight. "Instead of having four or five displays in order to get the content you need, you can start with just one and scale up from there." "What we are seeing in the market is a lot of principals bring their aircraft in for service and want to be able to upgrade the technology to make it look like they have at home. Venue gives them that functionality. So it's a really economical way for the aircraft owner to refresh their cabin interiors and get the latest technologies."

# Testing, testing

CCX Technologies and ATEQ Aviation are at the show demonstrating how they are automating previously manual testing processes through a new strategic alliance. CCX senior technical advisor Terry Markovich explains the combination integrates transponder testing and air data testing, which are currently done together but controlled separately. The partners' solution enables both processes to be controlled from one tablet on one screen, helping to reduce testing times and improve accuracy. Under the partnership, CCX will use its T-RX avionics tester to transmit curated avionics data over wi-fi to ATEQ's ADSE

650 air data test system for testing. This replaces a manual data entry process with auto-population of required avionics information. CCX director of sales Ricardo Irizarry says. "The highlight of the product is being able to control two different devices on one tablet. We did a beta showing last year and that generated a little bit of a buzz. It's getting a lot of traction, a lot of interest." As part of the partnership, CCX and ATEQ will become mutual resellers of the ADSE 650 and T-RX systems. The TRX is an all-in-one radio and pulse test tablet, while the ADSE 650 Air Data Test System is a tool for efficient air data and pitot static testing.



Irizarry: Highlight is being able to control two devices on one tablet



# Bravo, les Beaudoins!

The man who transformed Bombardier from a small manufacturer of snowmobiles to a rail and aerospace global industrial giant, and his son, who led the company through one of its most challenging decades, were yesterday presented with the NBAA's Meritorious Service to Aviation Award. Laurent, 86 (left), and Pierre Beaudoin, 62, received their accolade during the show's opening session. Laurent, who married the daughter of the company's founder, spent 37 years as chief executive from 1966. He oversaw a succession of acquisitions in the railway sector

and later in aerospace. The latter included Canadair, De Havilland Canada, Learjet, and Short Brothers. Pierre took over as chief executive in 2008 just as the Montreal-based company was taking arguably its biggest investment gamble, the launch of the CSeries, a narrowbody airliner competitor to Airbus and Boeing. The failure of that programme - it was offloaded to Airbus in 2018 along with its debts and rebranded as the A220 - led to a string of divestments and Bombardier's reinvention this decade as a pure-play business jet manufacturer.

Gogo's global dealer network developing STCs to cover virtually every business aircraft make and model



# Momentum builds for Gogo's LEO satellite internet system



Gogo installed the first Gogo Galileo HDX on this Challenger 300 (center and top of aircraft)

The STCs in development will cover virtually every size business aircraft and unlock a total addressable market of more than 18,000 aircraft globally, many of which have never had access to broadband inflight Wi-Fi prior to Gogo Galileo. That's about to change thanks to the compact size and weight of the HDX antenna. The STCs are supported by Gogo's vast dealer network in North America, Europe and South America, and will cover a wide range of airframes from super-light jets to ultra-long-range large-cabin aircraft, all to be completed in 2025. The airframes include:

- Airbus Corporate Jet
- Bombardier Challenger 300 series
- Bombardier Challenger 600 series
- Bombardier Global Express series
- Embraer Legacy 450/500
- Embraer Legacy 600/650
- Embraer Phenom 100
- Embraer Phenom 300
- Embraer Praetor 500/600
- Gulfstream G-200
- Gulfstream G-280
- Gulfstream G-IV/G-IV-X/G-450
- Gulfstream G-V/G-550
- HondaJet
- King Air series
- Learjet 40/45/70/75
- Pilatus PC-12
- Pilatus PC-24
- Textron Citation Jet 525 series
- Textron Citation Latitude
- Textron Citation X/X+
- Textron Citation XL/XLS
- Beechcraft Hawker series



Germany-based Atlas Air Services AG is getting the first EASA STC on this Cessna Citation CJ+

Gogo anticipates the STC portfolio will continue to grow in the coming weeks, and the company is in discussions with all of the business aviation aircraft manufacturers for aftermarket STCs and service bulletins. "The exceptional response from our dealer network is a testament to the strong demand for Gogo Galileo in the industry," said Sergio Aguirre, president and chief operating officer for Gogo. "Finally, operators around the world now have access to true aviation-grade broadband connectivity regardless of the size of aircraft they operate or where they fly." The HDX is a fuselage-mounted, electronically steered antenna (ESA), designed with a small form factor to fit on any size business aircraft.

But don't let its size fool you - this system will perform, delivering peak speeds up to 60 Mbps, and mean speeds very close to peak at 57 Mbps. "Gogo Galileo HDX stands to revolutionize business aviation inflight connectivity by delivering a fast, low-latency Wi-Fi experience to aircraft of all sizes, especially small jets," said Aguirre. "I'm pleased to say we remain on track to deliver this game-changing technology late this year." Gogo Galileo is backed by Eutelsat OneWeb's enterprise-grade Low-Earth-Orbit (LEO) network. Designed for mobility, the network will deliver low variability and consistent performance across all routes globally. "The Eutelsat OneWeb LEO constellation is fully deployed, and we are finalizing the ground infrastructure to deliver seamless, low latency and high-performance broadband connectivity to business jets no matter where they fly," said Jason Sperry, head of business aviation for Eutelsat OneWeb. Gogo Galileo is an easy upgrade to any AVANCE system (AVANCE L3, L5, LX5, SCS), requiring power in and ethernet out, for a simplified installation and minimal disruption to the aircraft. Gogo has been flight testing the system and network since early September making adjustments to ensure maximum performance once it launches commercially. Gogo is accepting purchase orders for the HDX and is offering a special promotional rebate of \$25,000, available for a limited time, to current Gogo customers with a legacy air-to-ground system (ATG 1000, 2000, 4000, 5000) who upgrade to an AVANCE SCS with the HDX. ▶

Inflight connectivity's next revolution has arrived



# Reimagining inflight Wi-Fi

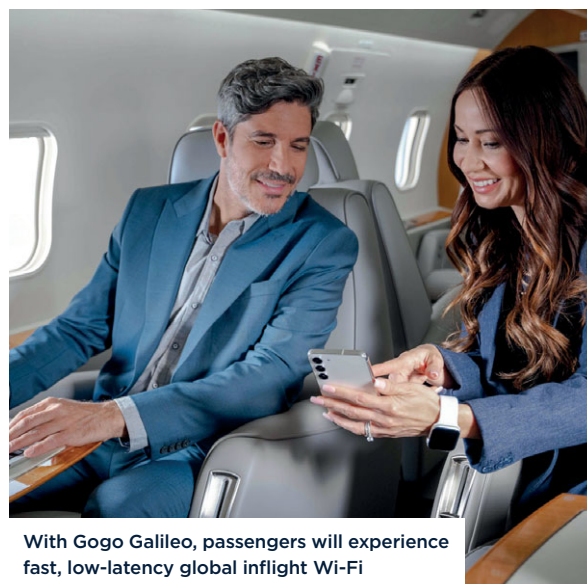
Technology moves fast and that's especially true with today's inflight Wi-Fi systems. New broadband Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite networks are ushering in a new era of inflight connectivity that will forever change the connectivity experience for business aviation operators on a global scale.

With new LEO networks in place, business aviation aircraft owners and passengers no longer have to worry about the availability, performance, cost or geographic coverage of the network. And LEO enables new antenna technology that is smaller, lighter, and more affordable to operate than ever before.

Gogo Galileo is the new LEO service from Gogo Business Aviation, and it will deliver fast, low-latency broadband Wi-Fi to aircraft of any size worldwide, something no other provider is offering today.

"With Gogo Galileo, we imagined a world where our system could fit on any size aircraft with four times the performance of any other previous systems that were operating in aviation, and at a quarter of the cost," said Sergio Aguirre, Gogo's president and COO. "Gogo Galileo HDX is the deliverable of reimagining what inflight Wi-Fi should and can be for all business aviation operators worldwide."

Gogo completed installation of the HDX antenna, its most compact antenna, on a Challenger 300 in August and has been flight testing the system



With Gogo Galileo, passengers will experience fast, low-latency global inflight Wi-Fi



Gogo Galileo will utilize the Eutelsat OneWeb LEO constellation

during the past several weeks.

"The system has been performing well during our recent flights and everything is progressing as we expected, which is great news for the industry, because operators are hungry for an aviation-grade LEO system," Aguirre added.

When choosing an inflight connectivity solution

and provider, Aguirre says there's more to consider than fast connectivity.

"When you're making the kind of investment to add inflight connectivity to your aircraft, you can't afford to make the wrong choice. You need to ask: Is the company committed to business aviation for the long term? Is there a foundation of trust and

reliability? And what kind of customer support will you get?" said Aguirre. "Gogo does one thing - inflight connectivity for business aviation, and we do it very well. Your inflight connectivity is our only concern."

A few aspects of Gogo's business are unique, helping it stand out from the rest of the LEO crowd:

- Built by business aviation, for business aviation: Gogo serves business aviation, which means Gogo understands the unique needs of business aviation and builds its systems to withstand the rigors of aircraft operation.
- World-class customer support: Gogo provides white-glove and dedicated customer support from a team of experts in business aviation connectivity who are available 24/7/365.
- AVANCE: If you already have a Gogo AVANCE system (SCS, L3 or L5) installed in your aircraft, the cost and downtime to upgrade to Gogo Galileo is significantly less compared with adding a non-Gogo system and starting from scratch. AVANCE also helps future-proof your investment because AVANCE was designed so you can easily add satellite with air to ground for redundancy and increased bandwidth, as well as any future networks and technological advancements.
- Gogo Vision: The industry's only inflight entertainment service offering hundreds of movies and TV programs, a premium 3D moving map, 30 leading magazines titles in digital format, and business news.
- Over-the-air software updates: Keep all Gogo AVANCE LRUs updated and with the latest technology, for one aircraft or an entire fleet, from anywhere in the world, with no down time required.
- Cybersecurity: Gogo prioritizes the security of its inflight connectivity services, implementing robust measures to safeguard data. With Gogo, security is built into every system. ■



## Gogo Galileo tour launches nationwide

State-of-the-art mobile demo room coming to a city near you

Gogo Business Aviation is launching a nationwide Gogo Galileo tour here in Las Vegas at the static display AD\_325, bringing an interactive Gogo Galileo experience to business aviation professionals that will be traveling across the United States from now through early March.

The state-of-the-art mobile demo room was designed to give customers and business aviation professionals from across the industry the ability to experience Gogo Galileo, the company's Low-Earth-Orbit (LEO) satellite broadband solution built for any size business aircraft flying globally.

"For anyone curious what reimagined inflight Wi-Fi feels like, we invite you to come experience Gogo Galileo firsthand at one of our tour destinations," said Sergio Aguirre, president and COO for Gogo. "We'll show you what inflight Wi-Fi as fast or faster than your home or office is like and why Gogo Galileo is the right choice for you."

At each of the 32 tour stops, participants can test Gogo's high-speed, low-latency inflight connectivity solution via both the HDX and FDX antenna configurations - the more compact HDX, built to fit any size business aircraft from super-light jets and turboprops to larger aircraft, and the larger FDX which delivers best-in-class performance for large-cabin jets.

Anyone attending will be given the opportunity to trial both configurations using their own devices to experience online activities such as video conferencing, live TV, streaming video, and more, just as they would if they were flying at 40,000 feet.

Following NBAA-BACE, the Gogo Galileo tour will be traveling across the country with stops scheduled at FBOs and regional airports.

For the list of tour cities and locations and to RSVP for an in-person demonstration visit [gogoair.com/galileo-on-tour](http://gogoair.com/galileo-on-tour). ■



Gogo's staff of dedicated customer support professionals monitor every flight

## Gogo to acquire Satcom Direct

Gogo and Satcom Direct (SD) recently announced entry into a definitive agreement under which Gogo will acquire Satcom Direct to create the only inflight connectivity provider able to satisfy the performance and cost needs of every segment of the global business aviation (BA) and military/government mobility markets. "This transaction accelerates our growth strategies of expanding our total addressable market to include the 14,000 business aircraft outside North America and to deliver solutions that meet the needs of every segment of the BA market," said Oakleigh Thorne, Gogo's chairman and CEO. "Together, Gogo and Satcom Direct will offer integrated GEO-LEO satellite solutions that will provide the highest performance of any satellite solution, along with world-class customer support."

### Strategic Synergistic Benefits

Gogo is a leading provider of broadband connectivity services for the business aviation market with products and services on thousands of business aircraft of all sizes and mission types from turboprops to the largest global jets. Gogo operates an air-to-ground network in North America and is launching a fast new global satellite service, Gogo Galileo, that will utilize a

Low Earth Orbit (LEO) constellation. SD is the leading global BA geostationary (GEO) satellite inflight connectivity service provider with an extensive international sales and service footprint.

The move establishes a unique LEO-GEO-ATG product line for business aviation with unmatched offerings for all segments of the market. From air-to-ground (ATG) to meet connectivity needs in North America, to integrated multi-orbit LEO-GEO global solutions via the combination of Gogo Galileo and SD's Plane Simple GEO solutions.

It also combines two respected business aviation-focused companies and with a global sales force and white-glove customer support teams to serve Gogo and SD customers worldwide.

"Satcom Direct is thrilled to be joining forces with Gogo, a company that shares our focus on delivering outstanding service and leading innovation," said Chris Moore, Satcom Direct's president. "Our businesses have highly complementary core competencies, and our combined financial strength and expertise unlocks opportunities to invest in new technology and deliver significant long-term value creation."

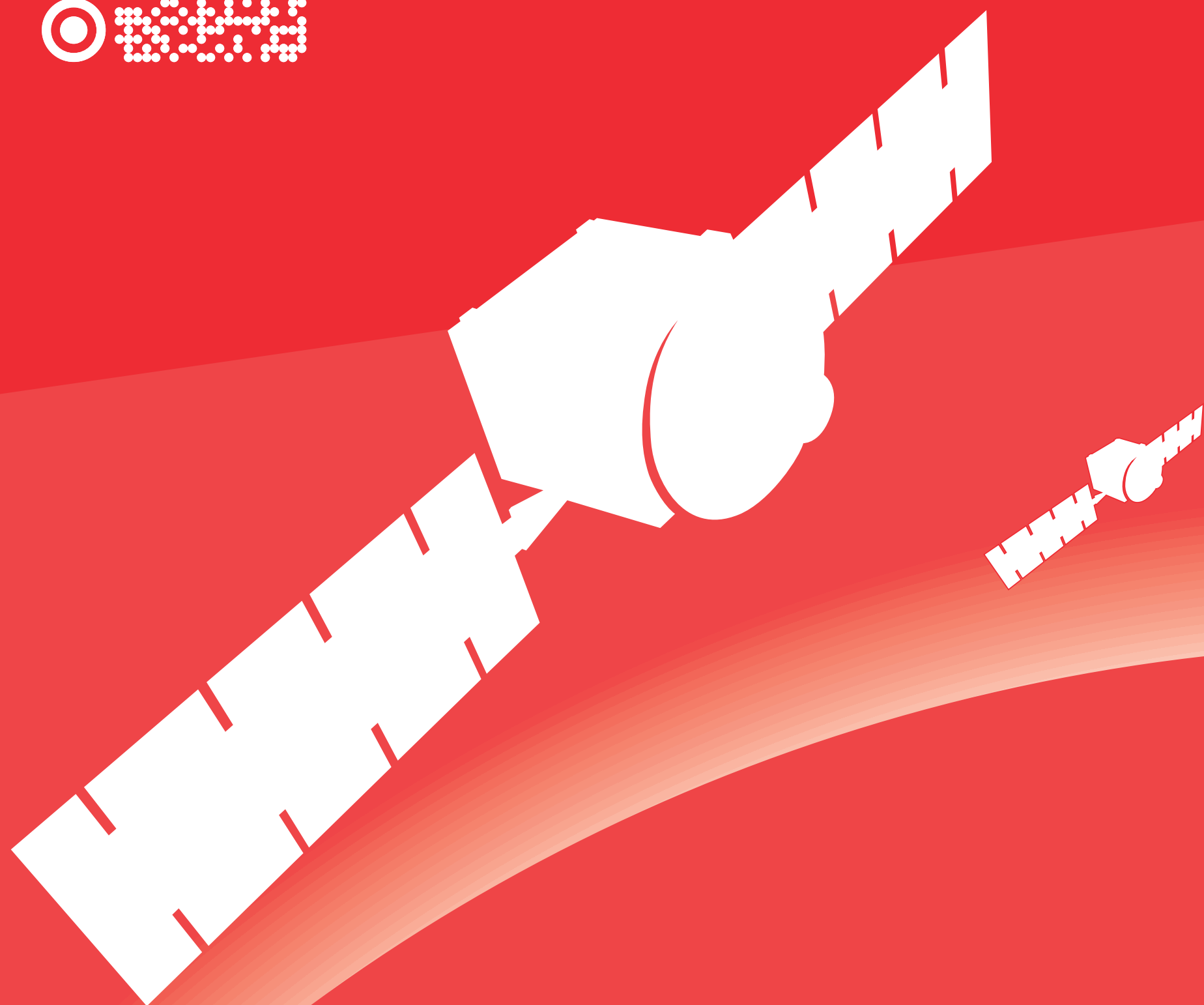
The acquisition is expected to close by the end of 2024.

# GOGO GALILEO ON TOUR

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Bunce (far left) and Bolen (far right) with industry leaders

## Honeywell wins Hybrid approval

Honeywell has won US regulatory approval for its Aspire 350 Hybrid satellite communications terminal, a "two in one" product that incorporates secure cockpit voice and data services with access to the Iridium satellite network for passengers, offering L-band speeds of up to 704kbps.

Honeywell Aerospace Technologies' vice-president and general manager, services and connectivity Steve Hadden says the system is the first in the satcom market to combine legacy modems to support essential safety services and an Iridium Certus broadband modem to enable fast connectivity.

According to Honeywell, the terminal is more likely to be a back-up system on larger jets, but on smaller aircraft it could perform a primary function. It could also be used to provide passengers with basic connectivity services - such as text - to free up a higher-powered package for the likes of video streaming or virtual meetings.

# Right message for a new political era

Jon Hemmerdinger

The business and general aviation industries are preparing to put their best foot forward as a new cadre of political leaders are set to take office in the USA and Europe.

Industry groups NBAA and the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA) are working with other lobby groups to craft fresh messages they hope will better communicate the sector's societal benefits, including efforts to address the carbon conundrum.

"No matter who is in office, no matter what the issue is, our ability to define ourselves - who we are, where we are and where we are going - is going to be fundamental," NBAA chief executive Ed Bolen said yesterday on the opening morning of the show.

His comments come as US vice-president Kamala Harris and former president Donald Trump battle a tight race for the White House, and as the 5 November elections also stand to shift political power in the US Congress. The European Commission is also set to select new commissioners.

GAMA chief executive Pete Bunce says his group has hired strategic communications firm Hill & Knowlton to help identify "what themes will resonate with people", while also conducting fresh research into the industry's societal impact.

Working with NBAA and other lobby groups, GAMA is developing a new "toolkit" to help leaders communicate the industry's importance and its efforts to hit net-zero carbon output by 2030.

Manufacturers say they are doing their part.

"Bombardier's entire R&D

portfolio is dedicated on environmental advancement - sustainability. We are putting really all of our focus on this," says the Montreal manufacturer's executive vice-president of aircraft sales and defence Jean-Christophe Gallagher.

"Sustainable aviation fuel is the most-important first step in order to be able to take that leap towards [net-zero] 2050," says Embraer Executive Jets chief executive Michael Amalfitano.

"We have 240,000 gallons of the fuel in Melbourne... Investments in the actual solutions."

## Anniversary is just Capital

Global Jet Capital is celebrating its 10th anniversary at NBAA BACE. The business aircraft finance specialist launched at the Orlando show in 2014.

Chief executive Vivek Kaushal says the company has "grown substantially", and reached the \$4 billion milestone in finance deals earlier this year.

One year after its

foundation, GJC took a significant step by acquiring GE Capital's business aircraft portfolio.

In 2018, it issued its first asset-backed securitisation (ABS) backed exclusively by business jet operating leases and loans, and this September completed its eighth ABS offering, bringing its total securitised assets to around \$5.8 billion.

## Jet Aviation takes SAF sites to eight

Jet Aviation has signed an agreement with World Fuel Services to offer sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) in Dallas, Houston, Palm Beach, Bedford (Massachusetts) and Teterboro.

It brings to eight the number of Jet Aviation FBOs offering SAF on site. The fuel will be available from 1 January. Jet Aviation already supplies SAF at Van Nuys in California, Bozeman in Montana, and Scottsdale, Arizona. It will also have SAF at its new location in Miami-Opa Locka.

"We are incredibly proud of this latest expansion of our SAF network in the US," says Richard Layson, vice-president FBO operations Americas.

## FLIGHT DAILYNEWS

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After a turbulent run-up to its IPO late last year, fast growing private flight provider FlyExclusive anticipates a strong 2025 thanks to a growing fleet and customer base

## Over the bumps



FlyExclusive has risen to become the USA's fourth largest charter operator in terms of fleet size in less than a decade

Murdo Morrison

FlyExclusive flew from a standing start in 2015 to become the USA's fourth largest charter operator by the early years of this decade. Now, 10 months after taking the company public and with a new fractional side of the business gaining traction, founder and chief executive Jim Segrave is looking forward to a "really good" 2025.

That comes after a challenging set of results for 2023 – largely the period running up to its December initial public offering (IPO) – during which the Kinston, North Carolina-based business made a net loss of \$46.8 million on revenues down slightly to \$315 million, from \$320 million in 2022. Much of that fall had to do with its abrupt termination midway through the year of a deal with fellow charter provider Wheels Up, to which FlyExclusive was providing flights on a wholesale basis.

However, Segrave's eyes are firmly on the immediate future after "a lot of transitional work to put us in a position for a really good year next year". That has included a fleet overhaul, with the shedding of around 20 "underperforming" aircraft – mostly long out-of-production types such as the Gulfstream GIV SP and Cessna Citation X – and the addition of new types that will return its portfolio to more than 100 aircraft this year.

In September, FlyExclusive struck an "aircraft management services agreement" with troubled fractional operator Volato, which has the largest HondaJet fleet in

the USA, which will see it take over the running of Volato's third-party owned aircraft. These comprise 13 fractionally owned, eight leased, and four managed examples.

FlyExclusive will work with the Federal Aviation Administration to transfer the aircraft to its own air operator's certificate. In the meantime, it will operate flights for the approximately 184 fractional and 265 block charter customers on the Volato certificate. Under the deal, FlyExclusive will retain several Volato employees on consultancy contacts equivalent to their current salaries and pay Volato a monthly licence fee for its software.

According to Segrave, Volato's aircraft can be added to FlyExclusive's fleet with "virtually no additional overhead". He adds: "We will leverage our infrastructure

to make [the Volato business] a profitable part of how we operate. We are sure we can get 80-90% extra utilisation from these aircraft." Volato recorded more than 12,000 total flight hours in 2023.

The agreement represents a dramatic reversal in fortunes for Atlanta-based Volato, which operates Gulfstream G280s as well as HondaJets. Company representatives rang the bell at the New York Stock exchange after going public through a SPAC (special purpose acquisition company) merger last December, the same month as FlyExclusive.

Textron Aviation Citations remain the biggest brand for FlyExclusive, representing around 80 of its soon-to-be 100-strong fleet. At last year's NBAA BACE, the company was revealed as the fleet launch customer for the new CJ3 Gen 2 light jet, which is due to enter service next year. The previous year, FlyExclusive announced plans to take on up to 44 new Citations, including as many as 30 of the CJ3+, the current production version of the CJ3.

The CJ3+ order was the catalyst for FlyExclusive to launch its first fractional programme at the end of 2023 – until then it had operated a solely company-owned fleet, offering ad hoc charter as well as jet card membership programmes. So far, says Segrave, the company has sold 67 shares ranging from quarter ownership to one-sixteenths. "We are happy with our performance so far, and where we are going with it," he says. "There is big competition out there."

Wholesale services represent about 40% of FlyExclusive's

revenues, but this part of the business took a knock last year when FlyExclusive stopped supplying flights to Wheels Up over an acrimonious payment dispute. All Segrave will currently say about the situation is: "We are not supplying Wheels Up."

However, providing services to other charter operators will continue to be an "important" part of the FlyExclusive model. "It allows us to sell empty legs and stay efficient," says Segrave, who adds that there are rarely any conflicts of interest working for a company that is its competitor on another day. "When we fly a wholesale flight, the customer is the wholesale customer," he says. "Our pilots provide a great service, but they don't hand out business cards to passengers."

As the company nears the first anniversary of its IPO, Segrave – who still owns 70% of the company stock – says the culture of the company has not changed. "There is more regulatory oversight, but in a way that's healthy, and the accounting is different to what you can do as a private company," he says. "But day to day, we run the business the same way, except that I have an independent board of directors now, who are smart and successful people who I can turn to for advice."

In a currently thriving market, Segrave maintains that a lack of potential customers is not a concern. "We have built this model on taking market share, so demand is not an issue for us," he says. "Constantly delivering dispatch reliability to stay ahead of the competition is the biggest challenge." ■



Segrave: We have built this model on taking market share

Several AAM developers are displaying their wares at the show with the sector at a pivotal time on its journey to certification, production and market acceptance

# Ready to advance?

Murdo Morrison

Does advanced air mobility (AAM) count as business aviation, or is it something else entirely? More than a decade after the first electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) developers and designs emerged into the public consciousness, the sector's dozen or so frontrunners seem divided over whether to embrace the legacy business aviation community, judging by how many of them regularly turn up at established events such as NBAA BACE.

Two eVTOL start-ups – Joby Aviation and Lilium – are at the Las Vegas Convention Center this week, joined by Electra, which is behind a short take-off and landing (STOL), hybrid-electric concept. All three are part of the Emerging Tech Pavilion. However, Archer, Supernal, Vertical Aerospace, Volocopter, and Wisk – together with the likes of electric, fixed-wing pioneers Eviation and VoltAero – are among the notable absentees, from the exhibition floor at least.

Germany's Lilium is making its US show debut with its yet-to-be-certificated four-passenger Lilium Jet, and recently announced Texas-based brokerage and management company EMCJET as its first stateside private sales dealer. The Munich-based company's vice-president of commercial for the Americas, Matt Broffman, says attendance this week makes sense.

"The traditional business aviation segment is a logical place for us to focus our initial commercial strategy because the infrastructure already exists with FBOs and charter operators that are eager for premium and sustainable aircraft," he says. "We have designed an aircraft that can, on day one, replace existing helicopter and some



The Lilium Jet is making its US show debut

regional jet routes while maintaining the level of comfort and luxury that business aviation customers are accustomed to."

US-based Joby is featuring a full-scale mock-up of its eVTOL design in the conference hall. "We're excited to showcase the future of sustainable flight at BACE and highlight the crucial role business and general aviation will play as we enter this new era of aviation," says head of government policy, Greg Bowles. "From exploring the full-scale mock-up of our aircraft to seeing the innovative components that power it, attendees will get a glimpse of how we're redefining air travel."

Manassas, Virginia-based Electra

is displaying what it calls its "ultra-short" hybrid-electric aircraft, which it claims will be capable of carrying nine passengers for 330nm (611km) and taking off and landing on 46m (150ft) runways. It describes the category in which it will compete as "direct aviation – seamless and convenient travel that makes new connections possible by bringing air travel closer to where people live".

"Electra is excited to showcase this aircraft at NBAA BACE so that the business aviation community can see an aircraft built for the electric future," says Marc Ausman, chief product officer. "In addition to the existing airport to airport routes, there are lots of new use cases to support business productivity for both passenger and cargo operations."

According to NBAA president and chief executive Ed Bolen, AAM is "quickly moving from concept to reality" and this year's show is the "pre-eminent event to see how this game-changing, on-demand form of transportation will have implications for business aviation and beyond".

However, what of the no-shows, perhaps the most noticeable of which is Volocopter, which made headlines at last year's BACE by making a 6min flight with its 2X prototype at the static display at Henderson Executive Airport? At the time, the Bruchsal-based company

had planned to have its two-seat VoloCity air taxi certificated in Europe by early 2024, ahead of a planned launch of commercial operations at the Paris Olympic Games that July.

The fact no passenger flights took place – the firm did manage a brief demonstration sortie at the Palace of Versailles – is an indication of the over-ambitious service entry dates promised by many AAM developers, overlooking the massive hurdle of convincing regulators of the safety of an entirely new category of aircraft. So far, only EHang of China has been successful in securing a type certificate for an eVTOL, in this case the unpiloted EH216-S – but only from the Chinese authorities.

Financial pressures too may be playing a part in decisions not to exhibit at major industry shows. Despite the promise of positive press coverage and increasing brand awareness in an influential sector, they are expensive, and often mean removing test aircraft and pilots at a crucial stage in the certification campaign.

Several AAM developers are at a critical juncture when it comes to cash flow. After inspiring early backers and ticking along for years in concept development mode without the need to generate revenues, start-ups are discovering that moving to the certification



Electra is displaying its STOL hybrid-electric demonstrator



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Joby says attendees will get a glimpse of how it is redefining air travel

and manufacturing phase – with production lines to be established and additional staff and suppliers paid – requires a fresh injection of hundreds of millions of dollars just when existing investors may be losing patience.

Earlier this year, Volocopter chief executive Dirk Hoke admitted that insolvency was a possibility for the company after an expected €100 million (\$110 million) loan did not materialise. Later, the company said it had received a lifeline from existing shareholders, without disclosing how much. Hoke, a former head of Airbus's defence business, is stepping down as chief executive in February.

In September, Bristol, UK-based Vertical, which has recently been conducting tethered flight tests of its VX4 prototype, said it needed to secure \$25 million from founder Stephen Fitzpatrick to ensure it had enough cash to operate as a going concern into the second half of next year. The German government meanwhile has just denied Lillium a €50 million state loan guarantee, part of a planned €100 million package aimed at supporting its immediate financial stability.

Joby and Archer are both quoted on the New York Stock Exchange, although their stock price has been in decline since the start of the year – Archer's more than that of Joby, which has benefited from interest in its design from the US military and the announcement in early October by automotive giant Toyota that it would invest an additional \$500 million in the company.

Developers that are part of a large corporation – such as Supernal, which is owned by South Korea's Hyundai, Boeing unit Wisk, and Embraer semi-spin off Eve – have the advantage of a deep-pocketed parent to guarantee loans and can also draw on the wider resources and purchasing heft of their owner. However, parental indulgence only goes so far and all these offshoots



Ride-share platform Blade Air Mobility has returned to the event

will need to be raising revenues and standing on their own feet soon.

Finances aside, all the AAM companies exhibiting in Las Vegas this week have announced major milestones in the past few months as they progress towards certification. Joby confirmed in May that it was transitioning to a production-focused phase of development and hoped to have its battery-powered eVTOL design in service next year. In July, it completed a flight of an aircraft fuelled by liquid hydrogen.

Lilium said on 1 October that it had completed the first systems power-on with the Lilium Jet and planned to fly the aircraft with a pilot on board in early 2025. With two production conforming jets currently on the assembly line, the company says six test aircraft will be used in the certification effort, with service entry targeted for 2026.

While NBAA BACE marks the Lilium Jet's first show appearance on this side of the Atlantic, the aircraft's actual US debut came in late September at an event staged by its distributor EMCJET at the Galaxy FBO at Houston Hobby

airport. EMJET says it has "secured production slots" that should lead to a round of customer deliveries in 2026.

Lilium has a policy of using distributors to champion its products to retail customers. In the UK, Oxford-based aircraft management firm Volare hopes to tap 'Cotswolds set' entrepreneurs to buy Lilium Jets outright or on shared-ownership, with Volare providing pilots. Typical clients might regularly charter helicopters and own luxury cars, says Volare. For them, the jet will deliver not just convenience, but one-upmanship in a social stratum obsessed with prestige brands.

In August, Electra continued the trend among several AAM start-ups of securing a leader with an impressive track record in conventional aerospace manufacturing. Former Boeing head of strategy Marc Allen took over as the company's chief executive in late August.

Rather than use rotating propellers to generate vertical lift and forward propulsion, as most eVTOL developers have done, Electra's fixed-wing aircraft deploys

eight propellers on each wing to direct air over the wing and generate additional lift. This "blown-lift" feature, says the company, gives the aircraft its unique short take-off and landing capabilities. Electra flew its EL-2 Goldfinch demonstrator for the first time in November 2023.

One other would-be AAM pioneer is featuring at NBAA BACE, but with a conventional aircraft. Blade Air Mobility is once again offering delegates the option to fly by helicopter between the convention centre and the static display at Henderson Executive Airport, something it has been doing since 2021.

New York-based Blade is not an operator – the helicopter here is flown by local firm Orbic Air – but rather a ride-share platform, or broker. It uses conventional rotorcraft on routes such as downtown Manhattan to JFK airport only as an interim measure before it transitions to an all-electric aircraft network. It sees this week as a branding exercise to promote its vision of affordable and sustainable urban air mobility, which it believes will eventually be provided by unmanned aircraft.

AAM also features prominently in the conference programme at BACE, kicking off today with an invitation-only Newsmakers' Luncheon at midday entitled 'The final mile of infrastructure for AAM liftoff', followed by a session in the Flight Deck theatre at 15:00 called 'The nitty gritty of commercialising eVTOL' and sponsored by Lilium.

Tomorrow's sessions include a talk on service entry challenges at 10:45 in Room 231, and an almost simultaneous session in the Flight Deck theatre on 'Streamlining air taxi operations with LOAs [letters of agreement] in Class B airspace'. Electra has its own presentation at 15:15 in the Flight Deck theatre, while, at 16:00 in Room 232, there is a discussion on 'Preparing your FBO for electric aircraft'.



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Business jets play a key role in any presidential election, the USA's vast size requiring candidates to traverse thousands of miles to win votes

# Air campaigns



The current VC-25As – known as Air Force One – have been in service since 1991

## Murdo Morrison

With just 13 days until America votes, Kamala Harris and Donald Trump – along with their vice-presidential running-mates Tim Watz and JD Vance – will be spending much of the remaining time hopping among swing states from Arizona to North Carolina, Wisconsin to Georgia, in bid to sway still-undecided voters.

The schedule of a presidential candidate in these last weeks of a campaign can be gruelling – a breakfast meeting with union leaders in Pittsburg, lunch with donors in Atlanta, an evening rally in deepest Appalachia. Despite modern virtual communications, in a country the size of the USA, crisscrossing the territory by air, pressing flesh and meeting voters face to face, has been essential for anyone aspiring to hold national office since the Second World War. Harris, as serving vice-president, has the advantage of being able to use government aircraft – which use the call sign Air Force Two when she is on board – at least when she is on official business. However, there are strict rules on when federal assets can be used by presidents and vice-presidents for purely campaign purposes.

Trump too has a trump card when it comes to covering the country.

The Trump Organization owns a Boeing 757-200 – registration N757AF and dubbed Trump Force One – which the former president has been using as his personal transport during his campaign. The 33-year-old aircraft, which he has owned since 2011, now has a US flag emblazoned on its tail. The jet has become as much part of his brand as Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue or his Mar-a-Lago estate.

The presidential poll is not the only vote taking place on 5

November. All 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 34 in the Senate will be up for grabs on the same day. While air travel is not a prerequisite for candidates in small states, that is not the case for those aspiring to be elected to Congress in larger ones: it takes nearly 10h to drive from one end of Montana to the other, for instance.

The election season is a busy time for specialist charter operators and brokers in this sector. They include Gregg Brunson-Pitts, founder

and chief executive of Arlington, Virginia-based Advanced Aviation Team, and a former director under President George W Bush of the White House travel office.

Among other roles, the travel office coordinates the charter aircraft that flies in tandem with Air Force One (the aircraft carrying the serving president), with the likes of the White House press corps, Secret Service personnel, and staff who do not travel with the president.

Shortly after the transition to the Barack Obama administration in 2009, Brunson-Pitts moved into the private air charter world, setting up Advanced Aviation Team in 2015. As well as arranging conventional business flights, the company has worked with several campaigns leveraging the contacts and experience he gained during his time in the White House.

They include the Biden-Harris effort in 2020, the Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz presidential campaigns in 2016, and the Elizabeth Warren's and Pete Buttigieg bids for the Democratic nomination in 2019/2020. "We're non-partisan and we work for both sides of the aisle," he says.

In the six-month run-up to a presidential election, campaign charters make up more than half Advanced Aviation Team's business; at other times, it is about a quarter. Although Brunson-Pitts says he will try to visit NBAA BACE briefly, he

Brunson-Pitts of Advanced Aviation Team: Our job is to see around corners



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He says that by this time in the cycle it is "crazy town" as far as his working week is concerned. "Before it all starts, I try to get as much sleep as possible and spend quality time with my family," he says.

**Heart-in-mouth**

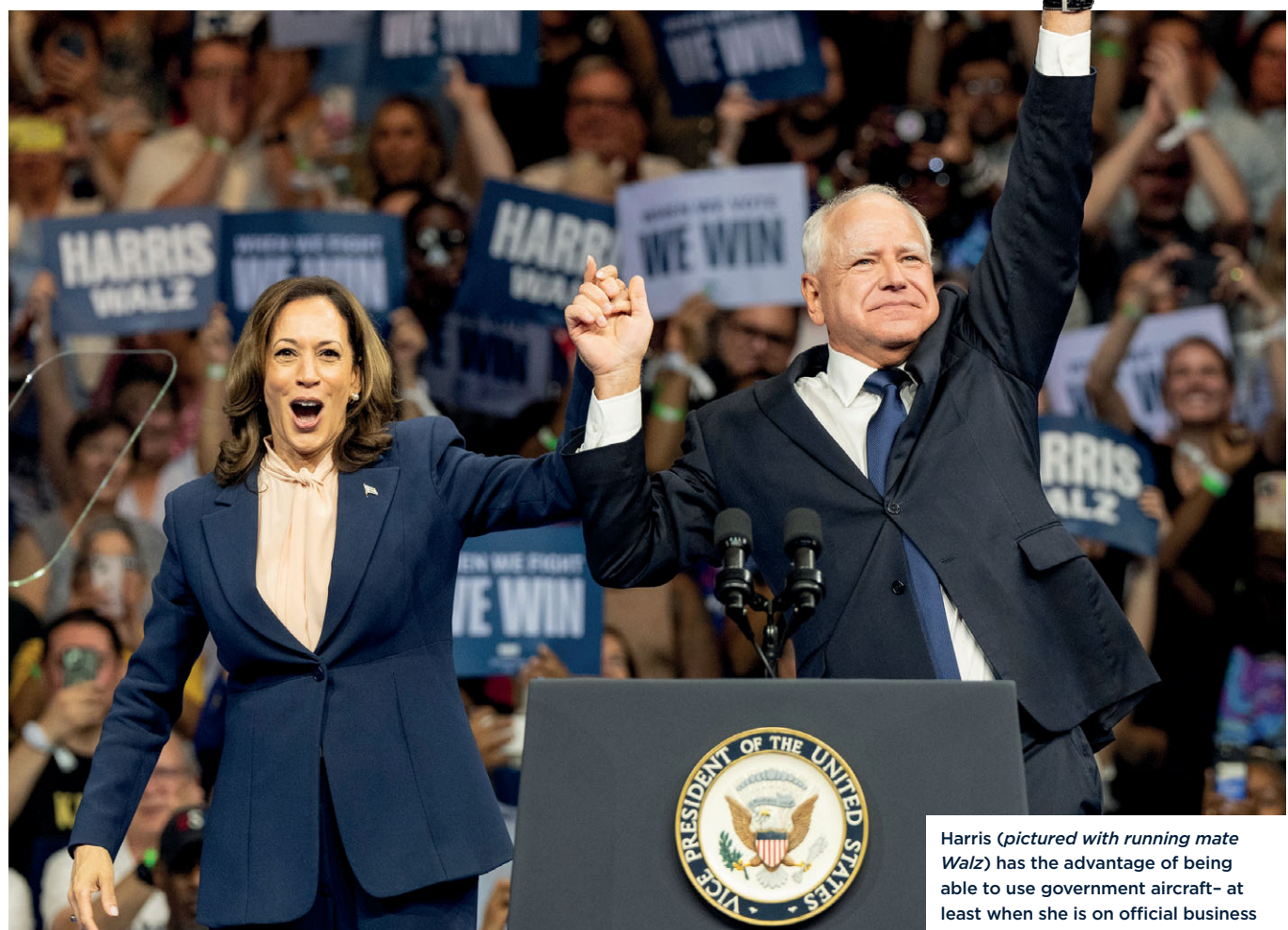
Although Advanced Aviation Team does not operate its own aircraft, Brunson-Pitts sees his role as taking all the headaches of managing air travel off the campaign organisers. "They have so many other things on their plate - hotels, buses, getting the candidate on stage, to TV interviews. The flight is just a small part," he says.

Running air transport for a presidential campaign team can be heart-in-mouth stuff. "The campaign will get more intense as time goes on and the stakes get higher. There will often be several stops in a day. A missed stop or something going wrong with the plane can really damage a campaign, so we work hard on making sure that doesn't happen," he says. "Any campaign will constantly be making short-notice changes. Our job is to see around corners."

Just as with any aircraft, technical issues can cause a campaign's best laid plans to go awry. In August a Boeing 737 transporting Vance and operated by Eastern Air Express had to return to Milwaukee Mitchell International airport because of a reported door-seal malfunction. A week earlier, Trump's own 757 made an emergency landing in Billings, Montana due to a reported hydraulic leak.

Occasionally, rather than chartering a jet on the commercial market, a campaign or a cause associated with a campaign - a so-called Political Action Committee or PAC - will draw on the generosity of an aircraft owner to donate flight hours. However, there are tight rules around such donations with the Federal Aviation Administration, Federal Election Commission, and the Internal Revenue Service all looking out for missteps.

There are FAA rules around what a FAR 91 carrier is permitted to do that most business aviation operators will be familiar with. Under these guidelines, the owner of an



Harris (pictured with running mate Walz) has the advantage of being able to use government aircraft - at least when she is on official business

aircraft is allowed to provide air transport for guests, so long as no fee is paid. However, that can fall foul of federal election laws, which regards in-kind contributions the same as cash contributions, explains Nathan Pietila, an attorney with Aero Law Group.

Campaign finance laws regulate contributions to campaigns as well as expenditures by these campaigns. While in-kind contributions are permitted to a campaign, there is a \$3,300 cap on donations by individuals to candidates for federal office, explains. Any value of a flight above that amount must be reimbursed to the aircraft's owner even if the owner is not a charter carrier, says Pietila.

Another complication is that corporations themselves are banned from donating directly to

candidates, so any campaign gift must be made by an individual. Campaigns and their donors often breach these regulations, he says. Every presidential campaign since 1992 has come under investigation by the FEC for improper aircraft use.

**Grey area**

Another grey area when it comes to campaign transport is the issue of where official business stops and campaigning starts when it comes to serving presidents and vice-presidents. Often trips will overlap, such as when a president flies on Air Force One to an official event, but tags on a political stop. In some instances, the White House counsel's office will step in to work out what percentage of the cost of a government flight should be recharged to a campaign.

As in 2020 when Joe Biden stood as a former vice-president, both candidates in this presidential election will be used to flying on either Air Force One or Air Force Two, typically a modified 757 operated by the US Air Force as the vice-presidential transport.

Air Force One, currently one of two Boeing 747-200s designated by the USAF as VC-25A, is arguably the most recognisable private jet in the world. Although Franklin D Roosevelt was the first president to set up a White House flight office, and Dwight Eisenhower the first to fly a jet - a Boeing 707 Stratoliner - on presidential business, John F Kennedy was the first to fly on a jet designed specifically for the office. That 707 was the first Air Force One as we know it.

The current aircraft - delivered in 1991 during the George H Bush administration - have been due for replacement for years. However, the VC-25B programme - a pair of heavily modified 747-8s - has shifted right several times. Back in 2018, when Boeing won the \$3.9 billion contract, the aircraft were expected to enter service this December. First flight is now slated for 2026.

The delay - largely the result of Boeing having won the bid on a fixed-price contract, which precludes it from passing on costs that rose during the pandemic to the customer - is just one of multiple crises the troubled airframer has faced in the past five years.

However, we do at least know what the aircraft will look like, the livery having been selected by President Joe Biden in March last year after rejecting a colour scheme chosen by his predecessor that differed significantly from that on the current VC-25As. However, that could change again should Trump make a triumphant return to the White House in January.



A 737 transporting Vance (pictured with Trump) recently had to return to Milwaukee after a reported malfunction



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A blend of hometown service and national reach is how emerging ‘co-ownership’ operator Jet Out describes its offer. The Milwaukee-based company has opened its second base and is eyeing more

Murdo Morrison

A private aviation company whose “boutique” co-ownership offer has proved popular in Wisconsin and the surrounding region has established a base in Florida and is looking at further opportunities to roll out its “local-national” model “west of the Mississippi”.

Milwaukee-based Jet Out – which has what it claims is the largest and newest fleet of Textron Aviation Cessna Citation CJ4 Gen2s in the USA – has been operating for the past several weeks from Sheltair’s fixed base operation at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport with two new Gen 2s that were delivered in September.

The Florida expansion marks the company’s first expansion outside the upper Midwest.

Gordon Cameron, vice-president of revenue, says it was a “natural move” because southeast Florida has the highest density of permanent residents in the state and is also second home to many Wisconsin “snowbirds” who spend the winter in Florida and are familiar with the Jet Out brand. The area also has “great infrastructure” and a ready supply of qualified pilots, he says.

The Part 135 operator, founded by chief executive Joe Crivello in 2018, is also constructing a 2,000sq m (22,000sq ft) hangar-terminal building at Waukesha County Airport near Milwaukee, due to open in the first half of next year. The facility will include meeting spaces, a kitchen, bar, game room, and lounge.

Waukesha is a 30min drive from Milwaukee’s Mitchell International where Jet Out opened its first FBO in early 2023, the first business aviation facility to be built at the airport for three decades. Branded Jet In, it comprises a passenger terminal, 3,700sq m hangar and



# Local hero

Jet Out says the CJ4 Gen 2 the best option to deliver the comfort and performance demanded by customers

900sq m maintenance facility, along with dedicated ramp space.

Cameron says Jet Out’s model differs from large fractional brands in that its fleets are locally based, so co-owners regularly see and fly in the actual aircraft they co-own. This way, the company insists it can “support our clients in a much more personal and efficient way than any national competitor that relies on the floating fleet model”.

The company offers one-sixteenth

shares of an aircraft in return for 20 days of flying. “Within that day you can fly as many hours as you like,” explains Cameron. As with other US fractional programmes, share purchasers who use their aircraft for business purposes can deduct depreciation from their tax bill, while benefiting from the operational cost savings of co-ownership.

After taking delivery of two CJ4 Gen2 aircraft from Textron Aviation in May last year, Jet Out ordered four more examples that October, with deliveries beginning this year. Once they are all in service, it will take Jet Out’s fleet of the Williams International FJ44-4A-powered light jets to seven. Cameron says commitments for “several more” CJ4 Gen 2s are likely to follow.

Jet Out, which has also operated entry-level Citation M2s, says it selected the 1,600nm (3,000km)-range type, which can carry eight passengers, as “the best option for delivering the comfort and performance demanded by the growing mission profile of our clients”.

Jet Out, which has a team of around 50 pilots and its own maintenance staff, is setting its sights on expansion into the west of the country. “There is a high propensity that we go westward,” says Cameron, who says markets such as New York City and the broader northeast, despite a large demand for business aviation, are

already highly competitive for light-jet operators. However, he says, “we will consider going anywhere there is unfulfilled demand”.

He says that Jet Out would like to open “three to four” bases a year for the next five years, with aircraft and pilots based in the area and mirroring its success in Wisconsin of “building a local retail charter brand” and selling empty leg flights through brokers.

As part of that model, it will consider opening branded FBOs. “We are trialing the customer lounge model at Waukesha and if it is successful we will roll it out at new bases,” says Cameron.

Cameron says Crivello founded Jet Out because he had benefited from private aviation while building a commercial property business in the mid-2000s. “For him, it was a multiplier. However, he was chartering aircraft and buying jet cards, but nothing really worked as well as he thought it could, so he decided to do it himself by buying a Part 135 company,” he says.

He says the company’s philosophy is to combine a personal, local charter service with the efficiencies of a larger operation. “Everyone loves the idea of a boutique provider in their backyard, but they also want the benefit of scale,” he says. “We are about putting a boutique service in the right places around the country.”



The Waukesha passenger facility may be used as a template for new bases



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The static display at Henderson Executive Airport features an array of aircraft, new and used. Each day we pick two that are sure to turn heads

# Winged wonders



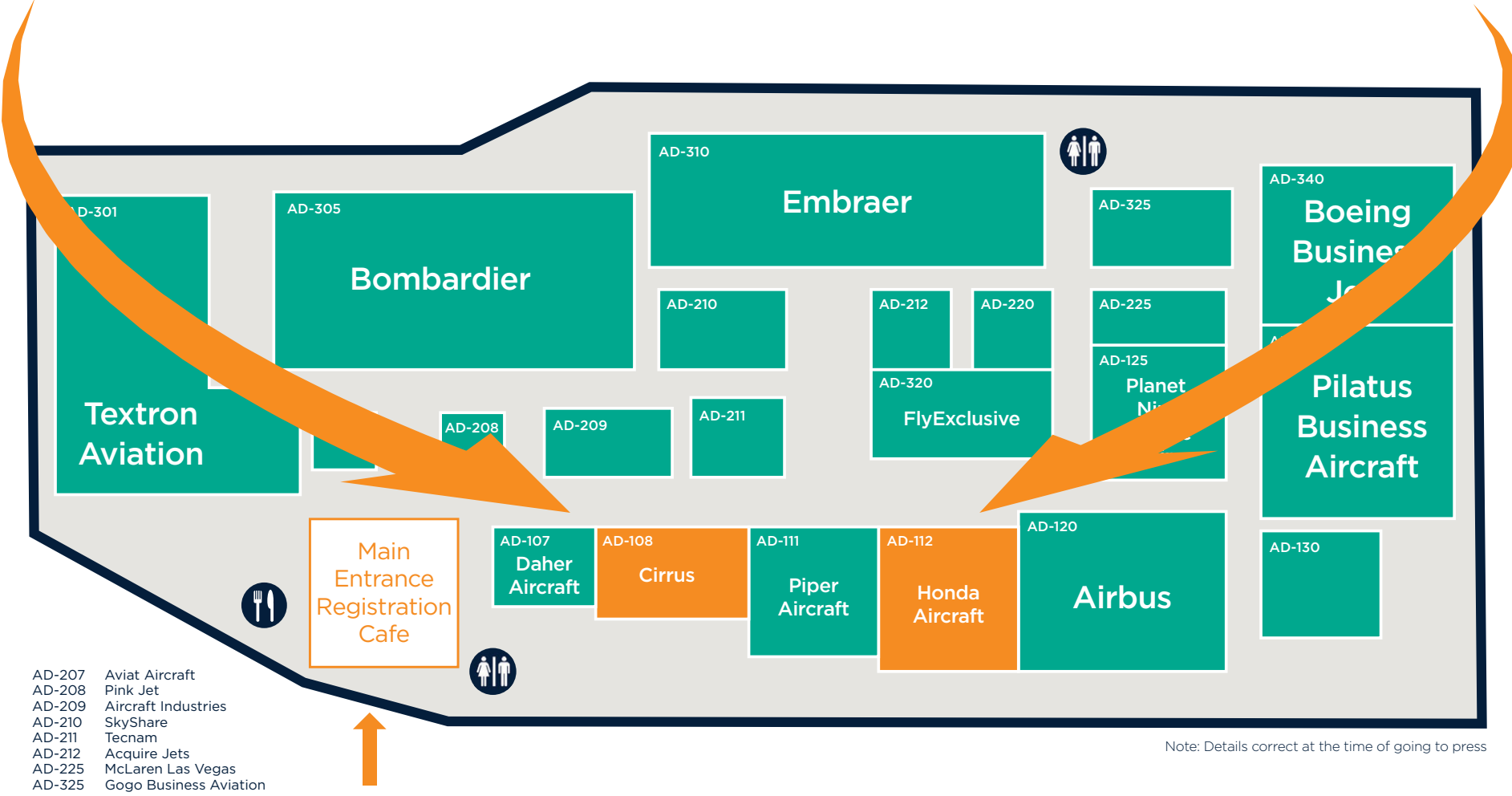
**Cirrus Aircraft SR Series G7**

The Duluth-based manufacturer unveiled the latest version of its long-running SR Series, the G7, earlier this year. It comes with a revamped interior, updated Garmin avionics, and is the first piston aircraft to feature dual Garmin Touch Controllers. Cirrus is also showing the G2+ edition of its Vision Jet.



**Honda Aircraft HondaJet Elite II**

There will be no mock-up of Honda Aircraft's latest programme, the Echelon, this time, but visitors to the static will be able to see the latest version of the current HondaJet, the Elite II. Announced ahead of NBAA BACE in 2022, the GE Honda HF-120-powered light jet comes with a higher maximum take-off weight and offers a range of 1,547nm (2,865km), 110nm more than its predecessor.



- AD-207 Aviat Aircraft
- AD-208 Pink Jet
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