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THE ARCHITECTURE OF AMBITION: INSIDE TOMOHIRO FUKUZAWA'S PLAYBOOK FOR SKYDRIVE

ARCHER TO ACQUIRE BOEING'S WISK AND SKYGRID IN HISTORIC DEAL

PIVOTAL'S BLACKFLY BECOMES FIRST EVTOL AIRCRAFT USED IN 911 RESPONSE CALL

EARLY BIRD ENTRIES OPEN FOR EVTOL INSIGHTS' GLOBAL AAM AWARDS 2027

VERTICAL AEROSPACE RAISES £100 MILLION TO ADVANCE CERTIFICATION PLANS

HEART AEROSPACE COMPLETES FIRST FLIGHT OF X1 AIRCRAFT

AEROBERM TO TEST VERTIPORT DESIGN FOR LOWER AIR TAXI NOISE

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Welcome



Welcome to the September edition of eVTOL Insights' digital magazine.

As the Advanced Air Mobility industry continues to evolve at pace, this month's edition reflects the increasingly global nature of the market, with stories and insights spanning North America, Europe, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. From emerging technologies and evolving regulations to commercialisation strategies and the infrastructure needed to support future operations, we continue to explore the people, companies and ideas shaping this rapidly developing sector.

Our next CEO feature is a fascinating conversation with Tomohiro Fukuzawa, CEO of SkyDrive, who shares his perspective on leadership, the company's ambitions, development of Japan's AAM ecosystem and the opportunities and challenges facing the industry as it moves towards commercialisation.

We're also pleased to spotlight our Women in AAM community, which continues to provide a platform for women across the industry to connect, share experiences and help inspire the next generation of leaders.

Looking ahead, preparations are well underway for our Europe Conference in Toulouse, taking place from October 14–16. Bringing together senior figures from across the AAM, aviation and unmanned sectors, the event will examine some of the key opportunities and challenges facing the industry as it moves closer to commercial operations.

Finally, early bird entries are now open for the eVTOL Insights Global AAM Awards 2027. The awards provide an opportunity to recognise the companies, individuals and innovations making a meaningful contribution to the future of advanced aviation, and we look forward to celebrating the achievements of the industry once again.

Thank you, as always, for continuing to follow eVTOL Insights. We hope you enjoy this month's edition and find it both informative and thought-provoking.

— Jason Pritchard, Executive Editor, eVTOL Insights

Main news - North America

Archer to Acquire Boeing's Wisk, Insitu and SkyGrid in Major Aerospace Deal



Boeing and Archer Aviation have announced the signing of definitive agreements in which Archer will acquire Boeing's Wisk Aero, SkyGrid and Insitu subsidiaries.

The deal will combine complementary capabilities developed over decades in autonomy, eVTOL aircraft, and unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) – creating a groundbreaking end-to-end physical AI platform for aerospace and defense.

Wisk, SkyGrid and Insitu have pioneered and incubated core autonomous flight technologies for the future that, in combination with Archer's air taxi, UAS and AI technologies, will bring new and innovative solutions to the market.

Wisk brings experience developing autonomous eVTOL aircraft and has conducted more than 1,700 flight tests across six generations of aircraft. Its technology portfolio includes flight-control computers, sensor systems and radar designed for autonomous flight and potential certification in civil and defense applications.

This positions Archer to deliver an end-to-end physical AI platform across commercial aerospace, defense and air traffic management that can lead the next generation of aviation.

Archer's Founder and CEO, Adam Goldstein said, "This is a watershed moment for Archer and the future of physical AI in aerospace and defense. This is the next big step forward in becoming a diversified platform, rapidly growing our revenue base and bringing scale to our business."

The transaction will also include Boeing taking a stake in Archer and entering into a collaboration and technology-sharing agreement.

Under the arrangement, Boeing will retain access to Wisk's core autonomous flight technology for use in its current and future commercial and defense aircraft. The transaction allows Boeing to retain strategic upside through its stake in Archer and simultaneously focus current and future investments into Boeing's core businesses.

Heart Aerospace Completes First Flight of X1, the Largest Battery-Electric Aircraft to Date

Heart Aerospace has completed the first flight of its X1 demonstrator, which the company says is the largest battery-electric aircraft ever flown. The milestone marks a step toward applying fully electric propulsion at a scale relevant to regional commercial aviation.

The flight took place on August 12 at Heart's test facility at Plattsburgh International Airport in New York. The piloted flight lasted 27 minutes, reaching 1,100 feet above ground level. During the mission, X1's all-electric propulsion system delivered more than one megawatt of power.

The aircraft, which spans 106 feet and weighs more than 25,000 pounds at takeoff, operated under an FAA Special Airworthiness Certificate in the Experimental Category. The test included taxiing, takeoff, climb, manoeuvring and landing, with the objective of demonstrating electric flight using a full-scale aircraft configuration.

Heart said X1 consumed approximately $5 worth of electricity during the flight. The company cited this as an early indication of the potential energy-cost difference between electric propulsion and conventional aircraft, although the economics of commercial electric aviation will ultimately depend on factors including battery performance, aircraft utilisation and charging infrastructure.

X1 is a full-scale demonstrator for Heart's planned ES-30, a 30-seat hybrid-electric regional aircraft being developed for FAA Part 25 certification. The ES-30 is targeted to enter service in 2031 and has attracted commitments from airlines including United Airlines, Air Canada and JSX.

Heart says the production aircraft is expected to deliver operating costs more than 40% below those of legacy regional aircraft, primarily through lower energy and maintenance costs. The company is currently developing the first pre-production ES-30 at a pilot manufacturing facility in Los Angeles, with flight testing planned for 2028.



Main news - North America

BETA Plans to Expand Manufacturing With Proposed $1 Billion EXIM Financing

BETA Technologies and the Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM) have announced plans to expand their existing financing relationship, with a proposed package of up to $1 billion intended to support the company's next phase of manufacturing growth in the United States.

The proposal would add approximately $830 million in new, non-dilutive financing to an existing $170 million EXIM agreement that previously helped fund BETA's aircraft production facility in South Burlington, Vermont. The financing remains subject to due diligence, approvals and the completion of definitive agreements.

If finalized, BETA said the funding would be used to increase manufacturing capacity, expand vertical integration and scale production of its electric propulsion systems. The company also expects to bring additional aerospace manufacturing processes in-house, increase domestic production capabilities and approximately double throughput across its manufacturing facilities over the next several years.

According to BETA, the expansion would support both its aircraft production and its growing propulsion business, which currently supplies electric propulsion systems and components to customers in the U.S. and international markets. The company also said the investment could create hundreds of additional advanced manufacturing and engineering jobs.

The proposed financing follows a series of recent milestones for the electric aviation company. Over the past month, BETA unveiled its hybrid-electric MV250 vertical take-off and landing aircraft for defense logistics missions, partnered with GE Aerospace, NASA and Boeing on a high-altitude hybrid-electric flight demonstration, launched the America's Consortium for Electric Skyways alongside Archer Aviation and Macquarie Capital, completed operational flights under the FAA's eVTOL Integration Pilot Program, and secured a commercial aircraft order from regional airline Loganair.



Elroy Air Secures $46 Million U.S. Army Contract for Autonomous Cargo Drone

Elroy Air has been awarded a $46 million, multi-year contract by the U.S. Army to develop an autonomous hybrid-electric vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) aircraft system for military logistics.

The agreement builds on contracts Elroy Air has received from the Army over the past two years. Work under the new program will focus on the company's Chaparral uncrewed aircraft system and its ability to deliver different types of payloads in contested and austere operating environments.

The program will address several technologies intended to support autonomous logistics operations, including modular payload systems, an expeditionary mobile mission planner, protected communications, navigation in GPS-denied or contested environments, and greater levels of autonomous operation. The system will also be evaluated for reliable operation under military field conditions.

Elroy Air's Chaparral is designed to transport more than 500 pounds of cargo without requiring a runway or other fixed infrastructure. Its hybrid-electric propulsion system is designed to provide a range of up to 450 miles without relying on charging infrastructure. The aircraft uses modular cargo pods that can be configured for different missions.

The Army contract comes as the U.S. Department of War has identified contested logistics as one of six Critical Technology Areas. The focus reflects growing military interest in logistics systems that can continue operating when conventional supply routes and infrastructure are disrupted or attacked.

Elroy Air said it plans to begin manufacturing Chaparral aircraft in the United States later this year through a domestic manufacturing partnership with Kratos Defense & Security Solutions.

The company has also participated in T□REX, a U.S. military testing and evaluation event focused on accelerating the adoption of emerging technologies.





North America Conference
Phoenix, Arizona - April 2027

Global AAM Awards - Early Bird entries now open

eVTOL Insights has officially opened entries for its Global AAM Awards 2027, inviting companies, teams and individuals from across the Advanced Air Mobility industry to submit entries recognising their achievements, innovation and contributions.

Following the success of previous editions, the 2027 Global AAM Awards will once again celebrate the organisations and individuals helping to shape the rapidly developing AAM ecosystem; from aircraft development and enabling technologies to infrastructure, autonomy, regulation, workforce development and wider industry collaboration.

The awards are designed to recognise both established industry leaders and emerging companies and talent, as well as providing an opportunity for organisations of all sizes to be recognised.

Early bird entries are now open, with the deadline set for December 31st, 2026. Entrants who submit before this date will benefit from the early bird entry rate of £249, before standard pricing comes into effect from January 1st, 2027 at a price of £299.

The Global AAM Awards will feature a range of categories designed to recognise excellence across companies, teams and individuals, with entries assessed by an independent judging panel comprising experienced professionals from across the AAM and aviation industries.

For full details about the categories, entry criteria and submission process, visit the Global AAM Awards 2027 submission platform.

Please note, once you have submitted your entry via the Awardforce platform, you will need to make a payment through eVTOL Insights Global AAM Awards 2027 Eventbrite page. Failures to do so will result in your entry not being considered for judging.

Wisk Breaks Ground on Vertiport for Autonomous and Piloted Aircraft in California

Wisk has begun construction of a new vertiport at Hollister Municipal Airport in California, creating a dedicated test site for autonomous and piloted VTOL aircraft.

The 100-by-100-foot facility will be located alongside Wisk's existing flight-testing operations at the airport. The company plans to use the site to evaluate terminal-area flight procedures, precision landing technologies and autonomous operations under a range of conditions.

The vertiport is being built to existing Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) standards and is designed as a modular, relocatable platform. Its infrastructure includes elevated steel structures, integrated solar panels, power storage and taxiway connections. Wisk said the design could also be deployed at other locations, including potential future eVTOL testing in Texas.

Wisk also plans to use company-developed transceivers installed on the landing pad to support reduced- and zero-visibility operations. The technology is intended to be applicable across different VTOL aircraft, including helicopters and other eVTOL designs.

The company said data collected at the site will contribute to regulatory and industry work, including the FAA's eVTOL Integration Pilot Program and development of guidance for vertical-lift infrastructure.



The project also gives Wisk an opportunity to test autonomous aircraft operations within an existing public-airport environment rather than solely at dedicated flight-test facilities. This could provide additional operational data around the interaction between advanced VTOL aircraft, airport infrastructure and established aviation procedures.

The vertiport is intended primarily as a test and data-collection facility rather than a commercial passenger operation. Its results could nevertheless contribute to the infrastructure and operational standards required if autonomous air taxis are eventually introduced into wider commercial service.

Ondas Opens New Unmanned Aircraft Training and Test Facility at NAAMCE in Ohio

Ondas has opened a new training, testing and flight operations facility at the National Advanced Air Mobility Center of Excellence (NAAMCE) in Springfield, Ohio, establishing a Midwest hub for its autonomous unmanned aircraft activities.

The facility will be operated by Ondas Sentinel, the company's division focused on autonomous defense technologies. The division includes teams and technologies from DZYNE Technologies, which Ondas acquired in July.

The site brings ground training, simulation, mission planning and live flight operations together in a single facility. It will support operator training and mission operations for the ULTRA long-endurance unmanned aircraft and Stratollite stratospheric flight platform.

The location at Springfield-Beckley Airport also places Ondas Sentinel close to several US aerospace and defense organizations. The facility is near Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) and the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center, while the 178th Air National Guard is located nearby.

Matt McCue, Chief Technology Officer, Ondas Sentinel, and Ted Angel, Executive Director, NAAMCE, were joined by federal, state, and local elected officials, military leadership, and regional aerospace industry and economic development partners.

McCuel said the facility would provide an integrated environment for operator development, testing, demonstrations and customer engagement.

He added: "Our presence here at NAAMCE gives us something few others can match: one integrated environment for training, testing, operator development, demonstration, and customer engagement. Ground school, simulation, mission planning, and live flight operations all happen in one place, in one pipeline. That accelerates training, it strengthens operational readiness, and it lets our partners see firsthand what low-cost long-endurance unmanned aircraft deliver."

"This ribbon cutting is not the end of a project, it's the start of a capability. And we're just getting started."



Joby Establishes 45,000-Square-Foot eVTOL Hub in Texas as it ramps up planned AAM operations in Dallas-Fort Worth



Joby Aviation has opened a 45,000-square-foot facility at Perot Field Fort Worth Alliance Airport, establishing a new base for its planned advanced air mobility operations in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

The facility, located within Hillwood's AllianceTexas development in Haslet, Texas, represents Joby's first significant presence in the state. The company will use the site to support preparations for flights under the U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Aviation Administration's eVTOL Integration Pilot Program (eIPP).

Joby is developing an all-electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft for passenger transportation. The Fort Worth location is intended to provide a base from which the company can demonstrate potential air taxi operations across the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.

The new facility places Joby within AllianceTexas, a large aviation, logistics and transportation development anchored by Perot Field. The site includes connections to regional transportation infrastructure as well as public- and private-sector organizations working on advanced mobility.

Joby Chief Policy Officer Greg Bowles said the company's presence in Texas will allow it to demonstrate air mobility services across the Dallas-Fort Worth area and the wider state. The company plans to work with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG), among other partners, as it prepares for eIPP operations.

"Welcoming Joby to AllianceTexas reflects our ability to pair flexible real estate solutions with the resources forward-looking companies need to grow," said Samuel Rhea, vice president at Hillwood. "Joby brings an important new capability and demonstrates how AllianceTexas continues to evolve to support aviation, manufacturing and the advanced air mobility sector."

Perot Field is also part of the AllianceTexas Mobility Innovation Zone, which brings together companies, policymakers and infrastructure partners working on air and surface mobility technologies.

Hyde County in North Carolina Becomes First in USA to Deploy eVTOL Aircraft for Emergency Medical Response

A flight-trained paramedic piloting Pivotal's eVTOL aircraft arrived at a 911 emergency call in North Carolina approximately 20 minutes before a ground ambulance, in what has been described as a national first which could reshape emergency medical response in rural America.

During two live 911 emergency calls, paramedic Quinn Reece piloted the aircraft directly to GPS coordinates near each emergency scene.

Serving as both pilot and the sole Advanced Life Support (ALS) provider aboard the aircraft, Reece carried essential medical equipment, including a cardiac monitor, airway supplies and a primary response bag, allowing patient assessment and treatment to begin immediately upon landing.

The operational missions mark the first deployment of an eVTOL aircraft as part of routine emergency medical response in the United States. By dramatically reducing the "First-to-Patient" interval—the critical time between dispatch and the arrival of advanced medical care—the program demonstrates a new model for delivering lifesaving treatment in geographically challenging communities where every minute can influence patient outcomes.

Hyde County EMS, Code Blue Resources and Pivotal developed the nation's first concept of operations (CONOPS) for integrating eVTOL aircraft into emergency medical response, completing more than 300 training sorties before launching live missions under Public Aircraft Operations. Akute Networks, serving as Aviation Program Manager, worked with the partners to develop the operational framework, protocols and flight procedures that made the historic missions possible.

Hyde County spans nearly 1,500 square miles of land and water, making it one of North Carolina's largest and most geographically challenging EMS response areas. The framework established in Hyde County will serve as a blueprint for emergency medical agencies nationwide seeking faster, more efficient ways to deliver Advanced Life Support to patients.





The Architecture of Ambition: Inside Tomohiro Fukuzawa's Playbook for SkyDrive and the Industrialization of AAM

Advanced Air Mobility has reached a distinct and demanding juncture. The initial decade of proof-of-concept flight demonstrations, high-concept renders and ambitious public market listings has given way to the grueling work of aerospace industrialization.

Across the globe, OEMs are grappling with the cold realities of type certification, supply chain scaling, capital discipline, and complex organizational management.

In this environment, corporate storytelling must evolve beyond superficial milestones. Industry observers and insiders no longer need an introduction to SkyDrive or its Chief Executive Officer, Tomohiro Fukuzawa. In a candid, wide-ranging discussion with eVTOL Insights, Fukuzawa stepped away from standardized corporate messaging to offer an unvarnished look at the choices that have shaped SkyDrive.

From the internal culture clashes between drone hobbyists and legacy aerospace engineers to the high-stakes decision to scrap a two-seater design in favor of a commercial three-seater, Fukuzawa details what it actually takes to lead an eVTOL enterprise through the reality of modern aviation.

The Demystification of Leadership

Before there was SkyDrive, there was Cartivator, a volunteer group of young automotive engineers meeting on weekends to experiment with personal flight concepts. Fukuzawa, then a procurement specialist at Toyota Motor Company, was accustomed to the scale and structure of global automotive manufacturing. Yet his motivation to build something entirely new was born out of a desire for creative ownership.

"In my youth, my dream was to become a businessman in a big corporation as my father was," Fukuzawa recalls. "I joined Toyota Motor Company in the beginning. But three years after I joined, we started an activity called Cartivator as a hobby; a Saturday and Sunday activity because most young people are just doing very tiny jobs when we see all the activity of developing automobiles. We wanted to make something new in mobility by our hands. We had a hundred ideas and one of them was flying cars."

By 2017, Cartivator was attempting to align its roadmap with a public flight demonstration at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. It soon became clear that building a certified, safe aerial vehicle required a dedicated, full-time venture.

"Four years later, we succeeded in flying a one-seater scale big drone," Fukuzawa says. "We realized that it was difficult to proceed from here as a Saturday, Sunday activity. We dropped the goal of the Tokyo Olympics, and decided that if we could get funding, we would start a real company."

Around this time, a profound personal loss radically altered Fukuzawa's career outlook, stripping away any remaining corporate hesitation.

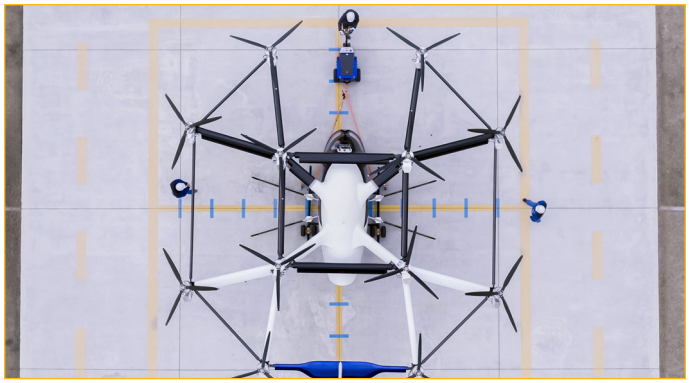
"My father died when he was 60," Fukuzawa shares. "My dream of becoming a businessman of a big corporation had changed. When I was doing my hobby, we sometimes talked with venture capital to know about zero-to-one activity, and realized that most of the investors or startup founders are just like us. My colleagues from university started startups and they were doing well."

That demystification of the founder archetype proved pivotal. Fukuzawa realized that building an aerospace company did not require a legendary background in traditional prime contracting, but rather a

disciplined, adaptable mindset capable of bringing disparate experts together.

"The biggest finding in my life is that normal people can make something new," Fukuzawa reflects. "If everybody knows it, why would more innovation happen? More and more people enjoy their work when innovation happens. The best knowledge I have gained is that."

Equipped with this perspective and bolstered by the global momentum generated by the 2018 Uber Elevate Summit and public-private policy committees in Japan, SkyDrive was officially incorporated in July 2018.



When Worlds Collide: Managing the Engineering Crash

Starting a company with a core team lacking traditional aviation backgrounds created an immediate imperative: SkyDrive had to hire experienced aerospace engineers to guide certification and formal vehicle development.

However, bringing legacy aerospace professionals into a team born out of fast-iterating drone mechanics triggered an acute organizational culture clash.

Fukuzawa does not sugarcoat the friction that ensued after SkyDrive conducted its high-profile public flight demonstration of the SD-03 prototype in 2020.

He said: “Between the drone veterans, who possessed an intuitive feel for the aircraft and agility, and the aerospace engineers, who were well-versed in the rigorous calculations and documentation required for type certification, there were intense, daily debates due to their fundamentally different development philosophies. However, it was precisely this intense chemical reaction that gave birth to our current development system, which combines the strengths of both.”

The path to unifying these different cultures was not entirely smooth, and it required SkyDrive to continuously review its management structure as the organization grew. Through this process of trial and error, however, a hybrid operational style unique to the company was formed; one which balances the overwhelming speed of our founding days with the rigorous document-driven discipline essential to the aviation industry.

"Initial management required people who had courage," Fukuzawa explains. "Then, who can deliver results becomes important. Next, who can manage large teams confidently at high speed becomes critical. We changed our management team three or four times to match each phase of growth."

This internal restructuring was further complicated by international expansion. As SkyDrive recruited talent globally across Europe, North America, and Asia, language barriers and differing work cultures added layers of operational friction. For Fukuzawa, navigating these dynamics was an essential leadership trial, forcing the organization to mature into a cohesive global entity.

The Pivot to Three Seats: Scrapping the Easy Path

Of all the technical and strategic choices made during SkyDrive's evolution, none carried more operational risk than the decision to abandon its early two-seater design in favor of a three-seater commercial aircraft.

In the early years of the AAM boom, two-seater architectures were widely viewed as the pragmatic baseline. Other OEMs were actively championing two-seat configurations, arguing that lighter payloads simplified thermal management, battery sizing, and weight distribution. SkyDrive initially followed suit, developing early concepts around a two-seat prototype.

However, as Fukuzawa and his management team subjected the vehicle's commercial unit economics to rigorous financial modeling, the reality became undeniable: a two-seater aircraft could not generate a sustainable return for commercial operators.

"In the beginning, we tried to make a prototype of a two-seater aircraft, but we definitely knew that two-seaters would never make economic sense," Fukuzawa states plainly. "When we changed from a two-seater to a three-seater, it was a very big, difficult decision."

The decision was fraught with risk. Transitioning to a three-seater—allocating one seat for a pilot and two for passengers—demanded a complete overhaul of the vehicle's powertrain, structure, and aerodynamic profile. It meant increasing development costs, lengthening the certification timeline, and returning to stakeholders and investors to ask for significantly more capital at a time when market skepticism was beginning to rise.

"In those days, EHang and Volocopter were two leading players and both had two-seaters," Fukuzawa recalls. "Why could SkyDrive do a three-seater? There were calculations, but at that moment, it seemed more optimistic than reality. There was a risk that we couldn't achieve it, that the development schedule would delay, and more money would be needed. But I believed there was no future with a two-seater model."

The pivot gained firm traction following the arrival of experienced aerospace leadership, including former CTO Nobuo Kishi. With rigorous aerospace calculations reinforcing Fukuzawa's economic intuition, SkyDrive formally committed to the SKYDRIVE (SD-05) three-seater design.

"Finally, I had the confidence to change that," Fukuzawa says. "It was a major test, but it was necessary for commercial survival."

Pragmatic Asymmetry: The Japanese Market Strategy

The global AAM landscape is often viewed through the lens of Western mega-projects. Leading US and European developers have raised

billions of dollars to build large, high-speed, tilt-rotor aircraft engineered for long-range intercity transit. These complex architectures require immense capital, vast vertiport infrastructure and highly sophisticated air traffic management systems.

Fukuzawa recognized early on that attempting to compete head-to-head with Western OEMs on capital-intensive, long-range concepts was a losing proposition. Instead, SkyDrive adopted a strategy of asymmetric pragmatism—building a compact, light-footprint multi-rotor aircraft optimized for short intra-city trips, tourist routes, and urban utility.

"If we do the same competition with the US or China, we will never win," Fukuzawa states. "We should have a different approach. Product-wise, we make a compact, small-footprint, lower infrastructure-cost vehicle that Asian markets can accept very well. Even if that represents 10 per cent or 20 per cent of the market compared to massive aircraft, there is a clear, viable space for SkyDrive."

This product philosophy aligns directly with Japan's broader industrial methodology, which favors disciplined, step-by-step execution over high-stakes capital burns.

"US companies always have a very big dream and gather big money," Fukuzawa observes. "Sometimes it succeeds, sometimes it fails. But in Japan, it is very difficult to get that kind of speculative capital in the early phase. A step-by-step approach fits SkyDrive and our market much better."

This incremental strategy dictates SkyDrive's initial commercial rollout. Rather than launching directly into high-density, schedule-critical air taxi networks, which demand flawless timing, complex air traffic control integration, and extensive ground infrastructure, SkyDrive is prioritizing tourist sightseeing and regional point-to-point routes.

"Air taxis need high timing accuracy and the operations are far more complicated," Fukuzawa explains. "Sightseeing is easy to start and easy to generate revenue from customers based on the experiential value. It is the right entry point to establish operational safety, earn revenue and build public trust before expanding into broader daily transport."

To illustrate his view on long-term market consolidation, Fukuzawa points to structural parallels in the global automotive sector.

"Even looking at the mid-to-long term history of the automobile market, the companies that have established a unique presence among many manufacturers are those that clearly defined their targets and roles," Fukuzawa notes.

"Toyota does everything with vast resources. Suzuki, on the other hand, focused relentlessly on compact mobility, capturing entry-level markets across India and Africa. Those are very different strategies, but both are hyper-focused. All the mid-tier companies risk getting swallowed up. That is why we are really focusing on easy urban implementation and high utility in daily life."

This focused positioning has earned SkyDrive strong backing from the Japanese government. Keen to maintain Japan's reputation for precision engineering and high-reliability manufacturing, regulatory bodies like Japan's Civil Aviation Bureau (JCAB) are working closely with SkyDrive to establish certification pathways.

"The brand image of Japan is very strong, especially across Asia, for reliable and safe manufacturing products," Fukuzawa says. "The Japanese government knows that general software innovation is often driven by the US and China, but they want to accelerate hardware and deep-tech innovation from Japan. That creates a strong mutual incentive for the government to support SkyDrive."

De-Risking Mass Production: The Suzuki Synergy

As the AAM narrative shifts from proving that aircraft can fly to proving they can be manufactured at scale, assembly line industrialization has become the primary battleground.

To solve this challenge, SkyDrive forged a major manufacturing partnership with Suzuki Motor Corporation. Leveraging Suzuki's production plant in Shizuoka Prefecture, SkyDrive has established a manufacturing subsidiary dedicated to building the SKYDRIVE aircraft.

Contrary to the widespread industry perception that scaling eVTOL production will be an insurmountable bottleneck, Fukuzawa believes the inherently simplified architecture of electric aircraft makes mass production far more tractable than traditional automotive or turbine aviation manufacturing.

"We believe mass production of an eVTOL will be easier than traditional aircraft or internal combustion automobiles" Fukuzawa asserts. "One reason is that we don't use transmissions or complex internal combustion engines, so the number of parts is vastly reduced. From a physical footprint and assembly standpoint, it is much simpler. Once we secure type certification and establish a clear economic model, scaling up is very achievable."

With manufacturing infrastructure secured through Suzuki, SkyDrive's path to commercialization is structured around three precise milestones leading up to its target 2028 Entry into Service.

"First milestone is in 2028: we achieve type certification and Entry into Service," Fukuzawa details. "The second goal is achieving profitability with stable manufacturing and sales of hundreds of aircraft per year, proving the enterprise is stable. The third goal is





changing daily commuting from ground to air, giving everyone the option to choose aerial transport."

Leadership in the Crucible: Managing Lows and Capitalizing on Waves

Navigating an aerospace program through multi-year development cycles inevitably brings setbacks. Whether dealing with supply chain delays, capital market contractions or testing hurdles, maintaining morale across a growing workforce is one of a CEO's most demanding tasks.

Fukuzawa's approach to crisis management relies on radical transparency, direct communication and breaking long-term pressure into manageable, short-term operational targets.

"In challenging periods, I personally try to listen to each person's voice," Fukuzawa shares. "As the organization scales, feelings and momentum vary wildly from department to department. I separate reality into two buckets: the facts we cannot change, and the situations we can actively influence. If people focus on how we can change the situation, they regain their motivation."

He stresses that setting clear, intermediate operational goals prevents teams from getting overwhelmed by distant certification deadlines.

"We always try to make good goals for six months and one year," Fukuzawa says. "Sometimes the goal is a first flight, sometimes doubling operational speed, or reaching parity with global peers. A clear, short-term goal keeps the team unified and focused."

When asked what personal qualities fuel his own resilience through these cycles, Fukuzawa points back to intellectual curiosity and the thrill of solving complex systemic problems.

"My curiosity is how to change the world, how to influence society, how to build a great team, and how to forge strong partnerships around the world," Fukuzawa reflects. "Those are things I get from my job every day. If I don't learn and improve something, SkyDrive will die. So it is a good pressure for my curiosity, for survival, and for learning to deliver results. When we make progress, we unlock access to the next level of the world."

The Five-Year Horizon: A Historical Precedent

As SkyDrive advances toward its certification goals, Fukuzawa remains deeply aware of the broader historical significance of his company's mission. In Japan, public commentary around eVTOLs often swings between extreme excitement and casual skepticism—frequently fueled by the term 'flying cars'.

Fukuzawa addresses this public perception with characteristic balance.

"In Japan, people read news comments that say, 'It's not a car, it doesn't have wheels!' And that's true," Fukuzawa laughs. "But the main point isn't whether it has wheels. The point is that, like a car, we want to use this new mobility in our daily lives. This is the first moment in human history where everyday people can truly fly in the sky as part of daily life."

He highlights the qualitative difference between commercial airline travel and personal aerial mobility.

"Riding a commercial aircraft is like riding a railway—you look out a small window, and it's a passive experience," Fukuzawa notes. "But piloting or riding in an eVTOL, going directly where you want and seeing the scenery around you, brings a completely new level of excitement. That is the value and joy we want to bring to society."

Looking ahead five years, when eVTOL Insights sits down with Fukuzawa post-commercialization, he expects SkyDrive to have left an indelible mark on both global transport and Japanese industrial history.

"For the world, we want to produce the first mobility option that allows people to fly freely without emissions and with minimal noise," Fukuzawa says. "For Japan, this will be an historic moment, one of the first certified aircraft programs led by a deep-tech startup. It will prove that a new generation of founders can build scalable, world-changing deep-tech companies."

For Fukuzawa, the journey from a Saturday hobby in a Toyota garage to the forefront of global aerospace leadership serves as a living blueprint for modern innovation. It demonstrates that revolutionizing aviation does not require grand corporate lineage, but requires the clarity to focus on what matters, the courage to pivot when the data demands it and the quiet persistence to build the future one step at a time.



First speakers confirmed for eVTOL Insights' Europe Conference 2026

eVTOL Insights has announced the first batch of confirmed speakers for its Europe Conference, taking place in Toulouse from October 14th to 16th.

The conference will bring together senior executives, policymakers, regulators, operators, manufacturers, technology providers and other stakeholders from across the Advanced Air Mobility ecosystem for three days of insight, networking and industry engagement.

Among the organisations already confirmed to participate are:
Invest Toulouse, Avtrain, LYTE Aviation, VINI | flyvbird, TompAero, ADS Group, Skyfly Technologies, Eve Air Mobility, MD Aircraft and Viasat.

Discussions are set to explore commercialisation, regional air mobility, aircraft development, regulation, airspace integration, infrastructure, connectivity and the wider future of European aviation.

The event will take off on Wednesday, October 14th, with an exclusive site visit of Musee Aeroscopia, giving delegates the opportunity to experience Toulouse's world-renowned aerospace heritage before the main conference gets underway.

Delegates will also come together that evening for networking drinks, which are being held at ADS Group's offices in Toulouse, providing an informal setting to meet fellow attendees, speakers and industry leaders ahead of the main conference day.

The main conference will then take place on Thursday, October 15th and will be hosted by Ascendance, the French hybrid-electric aviation company developing its ATEA hybrid-electric VTOL aircraft and STERNA propulsion system. The speaker programme will feature keynote presentations, fireside chats and panel discussions focused on the challenges and opportunities facing the global AAM market.

The event will then conclude on Friday, October 16th, with an exclusive factory tour at Ascendance. The behind-the-scenes visit will give delegates an opportunity to see the company's engineering, manufacturing and testing facilities and learn more about the practical challenges involved in developing and bringing next-generation aircraft to market.

Everdrone Drone Used in Emergency Cardiac Arrest Response in Sweden



An automated external defibrillator (AED) delivered by Everdrone's drone system was used in response to a confirmed out-of-hospital cardiac arrest involving a man in his 60s in Borås, Sweden.

The drone was dispatched as part of Västra Götaland Region's (VGR) standard emergency response and delivered the AED to the scene of the incident prior to ambulance arrival. The man regained a pulse at the scene and was subsequently treated in hospital.

"In cases of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, the first few minutes are critical. Everdrone's drone system helps healthcare providers get an AED to the scene as early as possible, giving the patient the best possible chance of survival," says Mats Sällström, CEO of Everdrone.

Following an emergency call to SOS Alarm, the drone was dispatched from its local base in Borås and delivered the AED directly to the scene prior to ambulance arrival. Bystanders immediately started CPR and attached the AED with guidance and support from the emergency dispatcher.

The AED analysed the patient's heart rhythm, and a defibrillation shock was delivered. The subsequent medical response was provided by the ambulance service and the other emergency responders.

"Every time our drone system is used in a real emergency, it reinforces the value of integrating drones into emergency medical services. The drone complements ambulances and other emergency resources by delivering life-saving equipment during the most critical minutes," says Mats Sällström.

The response formed part of Västra Götaland Region's operational emergency drone programme, which integrates autonomous drones into the standard emergency response for suspected cardiac arrests. The drones are dispatched automatically in parallel with ambulances to reduce the time taken to deliver life-saving equipment.

Electra Signs MOU With the City of Helsinki For Ultra Short Aircraft Project

Finland's capital city Helsinki, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences and Electra have signed a MoU to examine the potential for direct air connections between Helsinki and Estonia's capital Tallinn.

The cities are around 80 kilometres apart, with approximately 7.5 million passenger journeys made between them each year.

The study will investigate whether Electra's Ultra Short aircraft could provide a more direct alternative by operating from smaller access points located closer to where passengers begin and end their journeys. Potential sites could include areas such as parking facilities, barges and other compact locations, rather than conventional airport runways.

Electra's nine-passenger EL9 aircraft is designed to operate from areas requiring a take-off and landing distance of around 50 metres. The company is developing the concept around what it calls "Direct Aviation", using smaller infrastructure to connect regional destinations without relying exclusively on established airports.

Under the agreement, the three partners will assess passenger demand, infrastructure requirements, operating economics and regulatory considerations. The work will also examine potential commercial and public-private partnership models for future services.

Haaga-Helia and the City of Helsinki will analyse existing travel patterns between the two cities, including ferry and air traffic, while assessing how demand could change depending on factors such as ticket prices, schedules and seasonal travel.

Electra will examine potential access-point designs for candidate locations identified by Helsinki, including high-level requirements and indicative costs.

The feasibility study is expected to be completed by the end of 2026. Its findings will be used to develop a potential roadmap for Ultra Short infrastructure in Helsinki and assess possible commercial models for regional air services.



VINI | flyvbird Plans New Air Travel Route Between Karlsruhe and Berlin Airports

Regional aviation company VINI is preparing to launch a new connection between Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden Airport and Berlin, restoring a direct link between the two regions for the first time since 2019.

The service is planned to operate as a soft launch from October through December 2026, with flights connecting Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden with Berlin-Schönhagen/Trebbin three days a week. VINI plans morning departures from Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden and late-afternoon returns, allowing for both day trips and longer stays.

The route is being developed around a demand-driven model rather than the fixed-capacity approach used by traditional scheduled airlines. VINI will initially deploy smaller aircraft, including the 19-seat Dornier 228 and potentially the 32-seat Dornier 328, with capacity adjusted as demand develops.

The previous Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden–Berlin service ended in October 2019. According to VINI and the airport, the route struggled with the economics of operating a 138-seat aircraft, despite demand for a connection between the regions.

Under the new model, VINI plans to collect travel requests from businesses, institutions and private passengers before activating and scaling services. The company says its technology will be used to assess sustained demand and determine when larger aircraft or additional rotations are justified.

The service will also include ground transportation. VINI plans to coordinate a private shuttle from Schönhagen/Trebbin to Berlin-Mitte, with the bus connection included in the ticket. The airport is particularly suited to destinations in southern Berlin and Potsdam.

Karlsruhe/Baden-Baden Airport handled around 2.3 million passengers in 2025, making it Baden-Württemberg's second-largest airport. The new Berlin service is intended to form part of a broader regional network, with additional destinations to be considered based on demand.

VINI
your personal way to fly

Vertical Aerospace Secures $100 Million to Advance eVTOL Certification

Vertical Aerospace has secured financing commitments of approximately $100 million from existing and new investors as it moves into the next phase of its certification and commercialisation programme for its Valo eVTOL aircraft.

The financing comprises $40 million from Mudrick Capital Management through Vertical's existing convertible note facility, a $35 million equity investment from existing and new investors, and a $25 million issuance through the company's preferred equity facility with Yorkville Advisors. The Mudrick Capital component remains subject to definitive agreements.

Vertical said the additional capital will support several programme milestones, including its Critical Design Review (CDR). The review is intended to establish the certifiable design baseline for Valo and enable the company to build and test certification-conforming aircraft.

Other planned uses include expanding Vertical's Energy Centre to increase battery production capacity, developing future UK production facilities and retrofitting its third prototype aircraft for hybrid-electric flight testing scheduled for the first half of 2027.

Stuart Simpson, CEO of Vertical Airspace, said: "Following the momentum generated by our progress over the last six months, including our piloted transition demonstrations at Farnborough, we are focused on converting operational progress and partner engagement into continued advancement of our certification and commercialisation strategy."



Vertical has also been expanding its government and industry relationships. The company is in advanced discussions with the UK Government over up to £10 million in support for production facilities and next-generation charging technologies. It has also partnered with autonomous flight specialist Near Earth Autonomy on defence applications and reported interest from the UK Ministry of Defence.

In addition, Vertical has joined Honeywell Aerospace's VERTI-GO programme, which aims to support eVTOL integration into European airspace.

WOMEN IN AAM

Join the Women in AAM Community and Help Shape the Future of Flight

The Advanced Air Mobility industry is moving rapidly from concept to reality and women across the sector are playing an increasingly important role in shaping its future.

From engineering and aviation to regulation, operations, infrastructure, investment and business development, women are contributing expertise and leadership to one of the most exciting emerging areas of mobility.

eVTOL Insights' Women in AAM community has been created to bring these voices together.

The community provides a dedicated platform for women working across AAM and related industries to connect, share experiences, exchange ideas and build meaningful professional relationships.

Whether you are an established industry leader, an emerging professional or working to bring new ideas and technologies to market, the community is designed to support and connect you with like-minded women.

Being part of Women in AAM is an opportunity to expand your network beyond your organisation, discover new perspectives and engage with professionals working across different parts of the global AAM ecosystem.

The community also supports greater visibility for the women helping to advance the industry, creating opportunities to share expertise, celebrate achievements and highlight the diverse career paths available within AAM.

As the industry develops, collaboration will be essential. Building stronger connections between women across organisations, disciplines and regions can help create a more inclusive and representative AAM sector.

Now is the time to get involved.

Join eVTOL Insights' Women in AAM community and become part of a growing network of women helping to define what the future of flight looks like. Becoming a member is free. Please send your name, job title and company along with a headshot image to editorial@evtolinsights.com

www.womeninaam.com

SkyDrive, Air India And Suzuki To Assess eVTOL Medical Logistics Routes In India

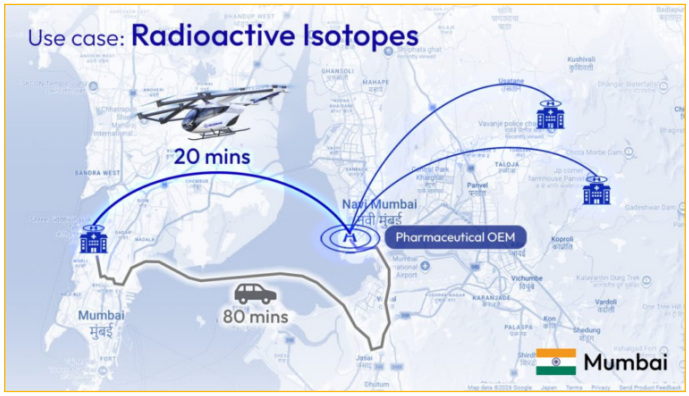
SkyDrive, Air India and Suzuki Motor Corporation are to evaluate potential routes for eVTOL-based medical logistics in India, focusing initially on urgent pharmaceutical, organ and medical transport.

The companies signed a memorandum of understanding in July to study the feasibility of using electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft for medical logistics. The latest phase will identify and assess specific routes where eVTOL operations could potentially address delays caused by road congestion.

One proposed use case involves the transport of radioactive isotopes used in cancer diagnosis and treatment. All parties will examine a potential route between a manufacturing facility in Mumbai and major hospitals in the surrounding area. The study will consider whether an air-based service could reduce delays and help prevent the degradation of time-sensitive medicines.

A second focus is emergency medical and organ transport in the Delhi National Capital Region. SkyDrive said the study will assess whether eVTOLs could reduce inter-hospital journeys that can currently take between 30 and 90 minutes by road to approximately 10 to 15 minutes by air.

The partners are also expanding the study beyond medical applications. They plan to examine whether eVTOLs could transport



aircraft components between parts collection hubs or maintenance bases near Delhi Indira Gandhi International Airport and airport terminals or maintenance facilities.

The latter use case is aimed at addressing aircraft-on-ground situations, where delays in obtaining replacement parts can extend maintenance downtime. The study will consider whether bypassing road congestion could improve the speed of parts delivery.

The routes announced are candidate locations for further evaluation rather than confirmed commercial operations. Any future services would require coordination with Indian government and aviation authorities and would remain subject to the necessary regulatory approvals.

EHang's EH216□S Completes First Public Flight in Hong Kong

EHang's pilotless EH216□S eVTOL aircraft has completed its first public flight in Hong Kong, as the city continues testing low-altitude aviation under a government-backed regulatory sandbox.

The flight took place at Hong Kong Cyberport on August 28, following the start of validation flights earlier in August under the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government's "Regulatory Sandbox X" project. The initiative is intended to test more complex low-altitude applications and generate operational data that can help inform future regulations.

During the demonstration, the EH216□S took off from a waterfront vertiport and carried out vertical take-off and landing, hovering and low-altitude cruising along pre-programmed routes. EHang said further public flight sessions were scheduled through August 30 to assess the aircraft's reliability and safety in higher-frequency operating scenarios.

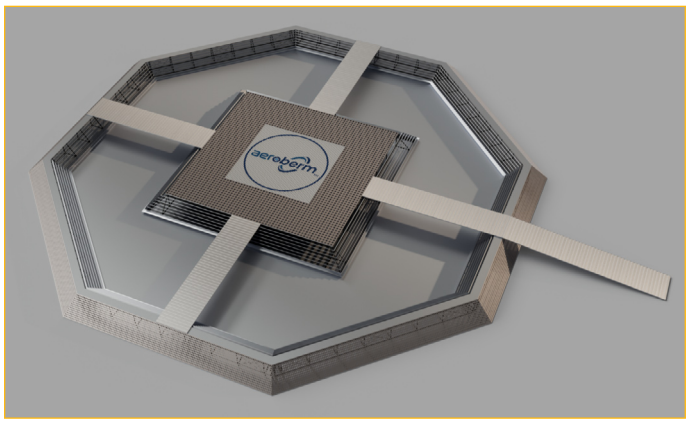
The project is being conducted with Kwoon Chung Smart Mobility and Hong Kong Cyberport Management. Its scope extends beyond flight testing to include the development of operating procedures and infrastructure, with the longer-term objective of assessing whether pilotless eVTOL services could form part of Hong Kong's transport network.

Regulatory development is a central part of the project. Hong Kong officials said the government is studying dedicated legislation for non-conventional aircraft, with drafting targeted for completion in 2027. The city is also using Regulatory Sandbox X to gather experience from multiple pilot projects before establishing more permanent rules.

EHang said the Hong Kong testing programme could provide a model for markets that do not yet have regulatory frameworks for pilotless passenger aircraft. The company's EH216□S has already received a Type Certificate, Production Certificate and Standard Airworthiness Certificate from China's Civil Aviation Administration.



Aeroberm to Test Vertiport Design for Lower Air Taxi Noise



The University of Bristol will use their state-of-the-art wind-tunnel facilities to test Aeroberm's patented fractal panel vertiport geometry — with an open invitation for eVTOL manufacturers to help optimise it for their aircraft.

A new collaboration between the university, Swinburne University of Technology and Aeroberm™ aims to tackle what many in the industry now consider the single biggest threat to public acceptance of a vertiport ecosystem: noise.

"From our studies to date on various generic surfaces we believe that replacing a solid ground surface with the elevated Aeroberm™ pad with a perforated fractal design will likely substantially reduce that noise penalty," said Dr. Esmaeel Masoudi, lecturer in aeroacoustics at University of Bristol.

The testing program is intended to examine how the landing-pad geometry performs with different aircraft designs. Factors such as rotor configuration, disc loading, aircraft weight and flight profile can all affect downwash, outwash and noise characteristics.

Aeroberm and the University of Bristol are inviting eVTOL manufacturers to participate directly in the testing program, helping optimise the Aeroberm panel geometry for their own aircraft — and shape a landing surface standard tailored to their specific acoustic and aerodynamic characteristics.

"It is a myth that electric air taxis will be silent. While they will blend into the background noise of a city when flying at altitude, there is no escaping the aero physics at a vertiport. A lot of air needs to be moved to achieve vertical flight and while the electric motor noise will be minimal, there will still be significant noise that could render some great vertiport sites unfeasible if not ameliorated," said Clem Newton-Brown, CEO and founder of Aeroberm (a Skyportz company).

Eve Air Mobility and RV Connex Partner on Thailand's AAM Regulatory Framework

Eve Air Mobility and Thai aerospace company RV Connex have signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to support the development of a regulatory framework for advanced air mobility (AAM) in Thailand.

The agreement is focused on establishing the regulatory and operational conditions needed for future commercial AAM services, including urban air mobility operations using electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft.

Under the MOU, the two companies will work on long-term industry and regulatory engagement, bringing together stakeholders from government, academia and the private sector. The collaboration will examine operational scenarios relevant to Thailand, as well as requirements covering safety, airspace management and infrastructure.

The partners said the work will draw on emerging international AAM standards while adapting them to Thailand's aviation environment. RV Connex will take a role in coordinating with local stakeholders as the framework develops.

"Thailand offers a fantastic opportunity for urban air mobility," said Johann Bordais, CEO of Eve Air Mobility. He added that working with a local partner would help establish the regulatory and operational foundations needed for the sector. "Working with RV Connex lets us help shape the regulations this industry needs to grow. This MOU shows our strong commitment to building the needed regulatory and operational foundations together with local partners.

"RV Connex wants to help make Thailand a leader in global advanced air mobility," said Sujate Jantarang, president of RV Connex. "Our MOU with Eve Air Mobility and our partners will create a strong framework to help Thai authorities develop modern, globally aligned regulations for this new technology."



MIDDLE EAST: KNETCO and Skyports Sign Partnership in Major Step Towards Advanced Air Mobility in Kuwait



KNETCO and Skyports Infrastructure (Skyports) have signed a Strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to work together on the development of Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) infrastructure and support the growth of the emerging AAM ecosystem in Kuwait.

Under the agreement, Skyports will become KNETCO's partner in Kuwait for vertiport infrastructure development, joint market development, stakeholder engagement, and the exploration of future commercial opportunities.

Riham Al-Ghanim, Chairwoman of KNETCO, said: "This partnership reflects KNETCO's commitment to future infrastructure and our confidence in the opportunities that emerging industries can create as well as supporting long-term economic development. We also recognize that developing a new mobility ecosystem requires close collaboration with the relevant government stakeholders, and we look forward to working alongside them as this sector develops.

The partnership brings together KNETCO's long-standing experience in critical infrastructure and telecommunications with Skyports' global expertise in infrastructure for Advanced Air Mobility.

Daniel O'Neill, ME General Manager, Skyports, said: "Through this strategic partnership with KNETCO, we are bringing together complementary expertise to help lay the foundations for a safe, connected, and commercially viable AAM ecosystem in Kuwait.

"With our vertiport network in Dubai well under construction, and with our core vertiport VDX already completed, we look forward to applying our industry leading skills and knowledge to Kuwait's AAM future."

Khaled Samy Hall, CEO of KNETCO, added: "People often look at Advanced Air Mobility and see the aircraft. I see the infrastructure behind it. This agreement is our first practical step. Our ambition is not simply to build vertiports. It is to help create the infrastructure ecosystem that allows Advanced Air Mobility to develop and grow."

Oman Selects GUAMobility Consortium to Develop National Advanced Air Mobility Strategy



The Sultanate of Oman has selected the international consortium GUAMobility to develop its national advanced air mobility (AAM) strategy.

This programme aims to guide the progressive integration of drones and eVTOL aircraft nto Omani airspace. Priority use cases include passenger transport, freight logistics, emergency medical services, search and rescue, infrastructure inspection, security operations, and oil and gas operations.

The mandate is led by GUAMobility, the consortium's lead organization, which brings together a multidisciplinary network of around ten international partners, each contributing specialized expertise to Oman's national AAM strategy.

Three organisations hold structural roles: GIS Hub, an Omani geospatial intelligence and data analytics firm; DTA International, an architecture, urban planning and engineering agency focused on airport, port and urban infrastructure; and Innovitech, a Montréal-based strategy and innovation consultancy specialising in ecosystem structuring and AAM roadmap development.

Supporting partners include EGIS, SETEC, FRACS (France Aviation Civile Services), CGX Aero, JADE Advisory, MIXHIVE and LUNA. Collectively they provide expertise in engineering, civil aviation regulation and safety, aeronautical information management, project financing, real estate development and next-generation mobility solutions.

Borhene Dhaouadi, Chief Executive Officer of GUAMobility, stated that Oman is pursuing a systemic approach in which regulation, infrastructure and industry advance together, rather than focusing solely on technological experimentation.

Sofiane Benyouci, Chief Executive Officer and Senior Partner at Innovitech, noted that the initiative places regulators, airports, public safety stakeholders and industry under a single national governance.

He added: "Oman is not merely imagining tomorrow's skies — it is laying the foundations today. By bringing together regulators, airports, public safety stakeholders, and industry under a single national governance framework, the Sultanate is transforming an ambitious vision into genuine execution capacity."

eVTOL INSIGHTS

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF
ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY



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