Lilium

A German company, operating from a flagship facility in Orlando, plans 14 ‘vertiports’ in Florida for its air taxi service.

Lilium, a German startup founded in 2015 by four engineering students at Munich’s Technical University, aims to slash travel time between cities using a seven-seat, electric jet that can travel upward of about 250 km on a single charge, cruising at 285 km/h.

The egg-shaped aircraft takes off and lands vertically, much like a helicopter, propelled by the thrust of 36 electric turbofan engines built into the plane’s four wings. The engines point downward into the plane’s four wings. When they engage, the Lilium’s Jet is ultra quiet. From about 10 meters away, it’s about as noisy as a passing car, while at an altitude of about 200 meters, it’s only as loud as a dishwasher. Because it’s powered entirely by batteries, it’s also emissions free.

The company anticipates its aircraft will earn certification from the Federal Aviation Administration by 2024. It plans to launch its U.S. operations in 2025 at Lake Nona, a fast-growing area in southeast Orlando. If all goes according to plan, Lilium’s fleet of jets (manufactured in Munich) will one day zip passengers between 14 “vertiports” across Florida, with proposed locations in Central Florida.

Melbourne, Palm Beach, Tampa Bay, Fort Myers, Miami and the Florida Keys.

“Nearly all 20 million Floridians will live within 30 minutes of our vertiports, and the 140 million annual visitors to the Sunshine State will have a high-speed option available to travel to their destinations,” says Dr. Remo Gerber, Lilium’s COO.

Lilium has partnered with Tavistock Development, the master developer of Lake Nona, to build its flagship facility in Orlando. The 5,200-m² building will feature two takeoff and landing areas, eight gates and a passenger terminal. Perfovia, a Spanish transportation infrastructure company and operator of airports (including Heathrow in London), will collaborate on at least 10 Florida vertiports, and Lilium has garnered USD200 million in commitments from its partners to develop its Florida network.

The aviation startup, which went public in September 2021 through a USD84 million merger with Qell acquisition group, expects USD1 billion in annual revenue by 2026 after launching its networks in Germany and Florida, says Alexander Assely, Lilium’s chief strategy officer. In Florida alone, the company predicts USD600 million in annual revenue when it’s up and running with 125 jets. Tickets are priced at about USD12.25 per mile, roughly USD50 for a 20-minute hop from Palm Beach to Miami.

Daniel Wiegand, Lilium’s CEO and co-founder, believes Florida consumers will find the cost worth it. “We will provide not only time savings, but the only form of non-automotive transport available for many routes between the key cities in the state,” he says.

In addition to operating the air taxi service, Lilium anticipates selling its USD2.5-million aircraft to companies and governments for cargo transport. The eVTOL (electric vertical takeoff and landing) vehicle startup also sees potential in serving as a “last-mile” connection to smaller cities where large commercial airlines don’t fly. Lilium recently inked a USD3-billion deal to sell 220 of its jets to Brazil’s Azul airline to reach remote areas currently serviced only by helicopter.

Co-founder and CEO Daniel Wiegand

Lilium’s aircrafts take off and land vertically, with the engines pointing downward during takeoff then pivoting horizontally for forward flight.

Why Florida?
- Good flying conditions
- A strong economy
- A “welcoming political environment”
- Lake Nona’s central location and proximity to Orlando International Airport along with the region’s growing aviation/aerospace and defense industry cluster

All of those advantages factored into Lilium’s decision to establish its shuttle service in Florida. “Florida is a phenomenal market because it combines a really big GDP, it’s the fourth-largest in the U.S., with great weather,” Alexander Assely, Lilium’s chief strategy officer, told investors at a recent capital markets day event. In building to USD25-million flagship facility, Lilium will receive up to USD871,250 in tax incentives from Orlando. The company expects to bring 143 jobs to the region over the next five years paying an average salary of USD26,500.

Florida vertiports, and Lilium will collaborate on at least 10 (including Heathrow in London), with proposed locations in Central Florida.

Lilium’s a flagship facility in Orlando for its air taxi service. The engines point downward into the plane’s four wings. Electric turbofan engines built into the wings’ four engines are pointed downward. When they engage, the Lilium’s Jet is ultra quiet. From about 10 meters away, it’s about as noisy as a passing car, while at an altitude of about 200 meters, it’s only as loud as a dishwasher. Because it’s powered entirely by batteries, it’s also emissions free.

The company anticipates its aircraft will earn certification from the Federal Aviation Administration by 2024. It plans to launch its U.S. operations in 2025 at Lake Nona, a fast-growing area in southeast Orlando. If all goes according to plan, Lilium’s fleet of jets (manufactured in Munich) will one day zip passengers between 14 “vertiports” across Florida, with proposed locations in Central Florida.

Melbourne, Palm Beach, Tampa Bay, Fort Myers, Miami and the Florida Keys.

“Nearly all 20 million Floridians will live within 30 minutes of our vertiports, and the 140 million annual visitors to the Sunshine State will have a high-speed option available to travel to their destinations,” says Dr. Remo Gerber, Lilium’s COO.

Lilium has partnered with Tavistock Development, the master developer of Lake Nona, to build its flagship facility in Orlando. The 5,200-m² building will feature two takeoff and landing areas, eight gates and a passenger terminal. Perfovia, a Spanish transportation infrastructure company and operator of airports (including Heathrow in London), will collaborate on at least 10 Florida vertiports, and Lilium has garnered USD200 million in commitments from its partners to develop its Florida network.

The aviation startup, which went public in September 2021 through a USD84 million merger with Qell acquisition group, expects USD1 billion in annual revenue by 2026 after launching its networks in Germany and Florida, says Alexander Assely, Lilium’s chief strategy officer. In Florida alone, the company predicts USD600 million in annual revenue when it’s up and running with 125 jets. Tickets are priced at about USD12.25 per mile, roughly USD50 for a 20-minute hop from Palm Beach to Miami.

Daniel Wiegand, Lilium’s CEO and co-founder, believes Florida consumers will find the cost worth it. “We will provide not only time savings, but the only form of non-automotive transport available for many routes between the key cities in the state,” he says.

In addition to operating the air taxi service, Lilium anticipates selling its USD2.5-million aircraft to companies and governments for cargo transport. The eVTOL (electric vertical takeoff and landing) vehicle startup also sees potential in serving as a “last-mile” connection to smaller cities where large commercial airlines don’t fly. Lilium recently inked a USD3-billion deal to sell 220 of its jets to Brazil’s Azul airline to reach remote areas currently serviced only by helicopter.