



ELECTRA JOINS VIRGINIA SMART AIRSPACE PROGRAM TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL BLUEPRINT FOR ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY INSTRUMENT FLIGHT RULES

News / Manufacturer



Electra announced a new partnership with the Virginia Advanced Air Mobility Smart Airspace Program to design, implement, and test a first-of-its-kind, low-cost instrument flight rules network for Ultra Short and other advanced air mobility aircraft complete with new, FAA-certified access points. Nearly all commercial aviation services operate under IFR to ensure reliability, predictability, and safety, especially when the weather is not clear. However, existing IFR arrival and departure procedures are not designed with AAM aircraft in mind. Without AAM-specific procedures, there could be unsustainable airport congestion, reduced time savings for passengers, and challenges in attaining full commercial viability of AAM aircraft.

The program's IFR routing, procedures, and new access points will separate AAM traffic from conventional flights, enable more direct routing, and be based on GPS navigation, making it a low-cost, scalable model for replication around the United States.

Electra, which has developed the world's first hybrid-electric Ultra Short aircraft, joins as a technical lead alongside NAVOS Air. The program is led by Virginia Tech's Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership, supported financially by the Virginia Small Aircraft Transportation Systems Lab, and

supported financially and technically by the Virginia Department of Aviation.

Tombo Jones, the Director of MAAP, an FAA Designated Test Site commented: “The Virginia AAM Smart Airspace Program is establishing the regulatory, procedural, and operational foundation for real-world AAM deployment—not in the future, but now. With FAA engagement, proven technical methods, and scalable infrastructure, Virginia is helping to define the national blueprint for how Advanced Air Mobility will operate in everyday airspace.”

Parker Vascik, Director of Product Strategy, Electra stated: “This partnership marks a critical step forward on our path to unlocking a new era of aviation – one that is simpler, faster, and without the hassle of today’s commercial services. By creating the necessary operational, physical, and digital infrastructure in an affordable package, we are one step closer to enabling safe, scalable, and reliable all-weather AAM operations across the country. Ultimately, our goal is to transform the future of travel, giving people the freedom to travel from where they are to where they want to go.”

Electra’ team of aerospace engineers and pilots will work with the other technical leads to design, implement, and test instrument procedures for Ultra Short aircraft, including during the most technically difficult part of flying in poor weather – proceeding from cloud coverage to a landing site. The GPS-developed procedures will enable flight in instrument meteorological conditions: broadly, when flight visibility is less than 3 miles and cloud ceilings are less than 1,000 feet above the ground. The program will also research the successful implementation of Ultra Short access points.

The program will also create a repeatable and scalable model for expanding AAM IFR networks, starting with the strategic connection of four Virginia nodes:

- Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI): an off-airport Ultra Short access point in Blacksburg.
- Roanoke–Blacksburg Regional Airport (KROA): an on-airport Ultra Short access point that keeps AAM aircraft separated from conventional runways and flight patterns at a large airport.
- Allen C. Perkinson Airport, Blackstone (KBKT): an existing FAA-approved vertiport in a mixed civilian/military use environment that supports Ultra Short access.
- Shannon Airport: an existing rural airport with a turf runway in a commuter community in northern Virginia.

A summer 2024 economic analysis conducted by the Commonwealth Center for Advanced Logistics Systems to measure the impacts of enabling AAM operations across Virginia projected more than \$16 billion generated in new economic activity, \$2.8 billion generated in tax revenue, and the creation of more than 17,000 high-value jobs across the aerospace ecosystem through 2045.

Electra’s Direct Aviation model uses Ultra Short aircraft, which can take off and land in as little as

150 feet, to unlock thousands of new Ultra Short access points – including fields, parking lots, and underutilized runways – bringing air travel closer to where people live, work, and play. By pairing practical infrastructure with transformative capability, Direct Aviation enables trips that were previously impractical or impossible and expands economic opportunity to communities of every size.

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