



FAA APPROVES TERRAFUGIA FLYING CAR PROTOTYPE AS LIGHT AIRPLANE

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Terrafugia's Transition is a flying car. It's an awkward, gangly beat, with wings that fold perpendicular to the ground like too-tall sails, and a wide, bubbly cockpit that seems out of place in the sky. It flies, and it drives, and now it has a waiver from the FAA that exempts it from some of the stricter requirements of being a light sport airplane, requirements hard to meet if it is also going to be a road-worthy car.

To meet highway-safety requirements, the Transition needs to be heavier than the 1,320-pound limit the FAA has set for LSAs, which lead Terrafugia to apply for a waiver from the limit in 2014. The stall speed of the flying car is also inevitably going to be above the 45-kt. maximum for LSAs, but certain automotive safety features like a safety cage and crumple zone could be beneficial in general aviation, leading the FAA to waive the weight and stall-speed limits for the Transition. It's a big win for the car, which still faces a host of challenges before it can really come to market.

The news was first reported in Aviation Week, and doesn't guarantee that flying cars will become practical in any sense. But by letting car safety standards augment or stand in for aircraft safety standards, it suggests what a successful hybrid may look like. And if Terrafugia's testing goes well, then the few people with space, money, and desire for such a hybrid vehicle could possibly get one.

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