

Hundreds of flying taxis to be made in Ohio, home of the Wright brothers and astronaut legends

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In this 2022 photo provided by Joby Aviation is Joby's pre-production prototype aircraft at the company's flight test facility in Marina, Calif. The same Ohio river valley where the Wright brothers pioneered human flight will soon manufacture cutting-edge electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft. An agreement announced Monday, Sept. 18, 2023, between the state and Joby Aviation Inc. will bring air taxi production to a 140-acre site at Dayton International Airport by 2025. Credit: Eric Adams/Joby Aviation via AP

The same Ohio river valley where the Wright brothers pioneered human flight will soon be manufacturing cutting-edge electric planes that take off and land vertically, under an agreement announced Monday between the state and Joby Aviation Inc.

"When you're talking about air taxis, that's the future," Republican Gov. Mike DeWine told The Associated Press. "We find this very, very exciting—not only for the direct jobs and indirect jobs it's going to create, but like Intel, it's a signal to people that Ohio is looking to the future. This is a big deal for us."

[Around the world](#), electric vertical takeoff and landing, or eVTOL aircraft are entering the mainstream, though questions remain about noise levels and charging demands. Still, developers say the planes are nearing the day when they will provide a wide-scale alternative to shuttle individual people or [small groups](#) from rooftops and parking garages to their destinations, while avoiding the congested thoroughfares below.

Joby's decision to locate its first scaled manufacturing facility at a 140-acre (57-hectar) site at Dayton International Airport delivers on two decades of groundwork laid by the state's leaders, Republican Lt. Gov. Jon Husted said. Importantly, the site is near Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and the headquarters of the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratories.

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"For a hundred years, the Dayton area has been a leader in aviation innovation," Husted said. "But capturing a large-scale manufacturer of aircraft has always eluded the [local economy](#) there. With this announcement, that aspiration has been realized."

The Wright brothers, Orville and Wilbur, lived and worked in Dayton. In 1910, they opened the first U.S. airplane factory there. To connect the historical dots, Joby's formal announcement Monday will take place at Orville Wright's home, Hawthorn Hill, and conclude with a ceremonial flypast of a replica of the Wright Model B Flyer.

Joby's production aircraft is designed to transport a pilot and four passengers at speeds of up to 200 miles (321.87 kilometers) per hour, with a maximum range of 100 miles (160.93 kilometers). Its quiet noise profile is barely audible against the backdrop of most cities, the company said. The plan is to place them in aerial ridesharing networks beginning in 2025.

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The efforts of the Santa Cruz, California-based company are supported by partnerships with Toyota, Delta Airlines, Intel and Uber. Joby is a 14-year-old company that went public in 2021 and became the first eVTOL firm to receive U.S. Air Force airworthiness certification.

With incentives of up to \$325 million from the state of Ohio, its JobsOhio economic development office and local government, plus \$500 million of Joby's own cash, the company plans to build an Ohio facility capable of delivering up to 500 aircraft a year and creating 2,000 jobs. The U.S. Department of Energy has invited Joby to apply for a loan to support development of the facility as a clean energy project.

Joby CEO Joe Ben Bevirt told the AP that the company chose Ohio after an extensive and competitive search. Its financial package wasn't the largest, but the chance to bring the operation to the birthplace of aviation—with a workforce experienced in the field—sealed the deal, he said.

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"Ohio is the No. 1 state when it comes to supplying parts for Boeing and Airbus," Bevirt said. "Ohio is No. 3 in the nation on manufacturing jobs—and that depth of manufacturing prowess, that workforce, is critical to us as we look to build this manufacturing facility.

JobsOhio President and CEO J.P. Nauseef noted that its dedication to aviation has carried the Dayton area through serious economic challenges. That included the loss of tens of thousands of auto and auto parts manufacturing jobs in the early 2000s and the loss of ATM maker NCR Corp.'s headquarters to an Atlanta suburb in 2009.

"This marries that heritage and legacy of innovation in aviation with our nuts and bolts of manufacturing," Nauseef said. "It really marries those two together, and that's never been married together before—not in this town. For a community the size of Dayton and Springfield, (whose people) take great pride, (and) have had rough, rough decades, it's a wonderful project."

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Bevirt said operations and hiring will begin immediately from existing buildings near the development site, contingent upon clearing the standard legal and regulatory hurdles. The site is large enough to eventually accommodate 2 million square feet (610,000 square meters) of manufacturing space.

Construction on the manufacturing facility is expected to begin in 2024, with production to begin in 2025.

Toyota, a long-term investor, worked with Joby in 2019 to design and to successfully launch its pilot production line in Marina, California. The automaker will continue to advise Joby as it prepares for scaled production of its commercial passenger air taxi, the company said.

The announcement comes as a bipartisan group of Ohio's congressional representatives has recently stepped up efforts—following an earlier appeal by DeWine—to lure the U.S. Air Force's new U.S. Space Command headquarters or Space Force units to Ohio. There, too, state

leaders cite the aerospace legacy of the Wrights, as well as Ohio-born astronauts John Glenn and Neil Armstrong.

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