

Volocopter flying taxi seeks to seduce Paris

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A German company is seeking to use the exposure generated by the Paris Olympics to overcome the opposition of local politicians and demonstrate that flying taxis can serve the French capital.

Volocopter hopes that by being certified in Paris—which has some of the strictest regulations for over-flights—it can prove that flying taxis aren't just science fiction gimmicks.

"If you can fly in Paris, you can fly in any city in the world," Volocopter's CEO Dirk Hoke told AFP.

The company's "VoloCity" is a two-seat electric vertical take-off and landing [aircraft](#) that resembles a gigantic insect crowned with 18 rotors.

Volocopter wants it to be the first such aircraft certified by both EASA and the FAA, the European and US civil aviation security agencies.

In the meantime, the aircraft is conducting [test flights](#) to be certified to fly over Paris, which requires showing that it has the same level of safety as a [commercial aircraft](#), which is 100 times more than that of a helicopter.

Statistically, that means one accident every billion [flight](#) hours, which is longer than the lifespan of any aircraft.

"Building confidence"

Hoke says he's hopeful to receive a special permit from EASA to carry out demonstration flights without paying passengers during the Olympics.

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A "learning period", Hoke says, to show that "these systems are not just fiction" and to win the public's confidence.

"Noise, safety and durability are the most important criteria for flying above a city," he explains.

In September, French environmental regulators judged as "incomplete" a study on the impact of taxi flights along the Seine, noting visual and sound disturbances.

Paris' municipal council issued a non-binding negative verdict on plans

to build a "vertiport" near the Austerlitz train station, with some calling the project "absurd" or an "ecological aberration".

"We have to take these views seriously and respond to these concerns, because what's important to us is not just the certification, but public acceptance," he said.

He insists the noise, which is 55 à 60 decibels at 75 to 100 meters, is nothing like a helicopter and is about the level of a conversation.

"We will have support when people see and hear the flights and realize that they don't disturb city life," Hoke said.

Volocopter needs 25 million to 30 million euros (\$28 million to \$33 million) for the two years of demonstration flights around Paris, and between 200 million to 300 million euros to prepare the next step.

The current configuration, with just one seat besides the pilot, will never be profitable. But a new aircraft with four seats should be ready by late 2026, early 2027. "That's when there will be a real business case," he said.

As to claims that flying taxis are elitist, Hoke recalls that the first Tesla was a two-seater electric roadster.

"Everyone said that it was ridiculous, just a toy," he said. "Fifteen years later, Elon Musk has changed everything. We can do the same for aircraft, and it'll happen faster than people think."

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