AIN NBAA CONVENTION NEWS

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MARIANO ROSALES

‹ Go Rentals attracted a large crowd yesterday afternoon when it drew the winner for its 2025 Mercedes-Benz one-year lease giveaway. Congratulations to Brittany Favero of Air Center San Diego on her new ride!

FLYING ON OTTO PILOT

By Matt Thurber

When a large-enough spot opened up on the NBAA-BACE 2025 exhibit floor, Otto Aerospace jumped at the opportunity to bring a mockup of its all-composite Phantom 3500 light twin-jet to the show. Showgoers have expressed surprise at the size of the airplane, which is designed to deliver midsize-jet performance in a Part 23 light jet with an mtow of 19,000 pounds.

Uniquely, the Phantom 3500 has a cabin volume of more than 800 sq ft, much larger than that of typical light jets, and the interior dimensions are also significantly bigger. Cabin height is 6.4 feet and width 7.5 feet, larger than even the average super-midsize jet, according to Otto.

With an NBAA IFR range of 3,200 nm (four passengers), the jet will be powered by Williams International FJ44-4 turbofans and cruise most efficiently at its FL510 maximum altitude.

Even more unique is the Phantom 3500's lack of cabin windows, except for the mandatory aft lavatory emergency exit porthole. Instead of windows, passengers will be able to view the outside world via external cameras delivering imagery to large 4K displays on the cabin walls and ceiling.

The display is an engineering mockup, according to Otto Aerospace CEO Paul Touw. "We wanted to see how it all looked, to make sure we got all the angles correct. And the only way to do that is to build it." That said, Otto is building more mockups; this one isn't the final shape. Subtle changes to the cockpit windows are planned.

Otto Aerospace's team members are well aware of the challenges of building composite aircraft. continues on page 30 ›

AMY WILDER

Williams International's FJ44-4A engine will power the SJ36, a next-generation light jet developed by SyberJet Aircraft. The partnership was made official at NBAA-BACE on Tuesday.

SyberJet picks Williams engine for SJ36 light jet

By Amy Wilder

SyberJet Aircraft and Williams International have entered into an exclusive engine partnership to power SyberJet's next-generation light jet, the SJ36. Under a deal inked on Tuesday afternoon at NBAA-BACE 2025, the agreement designates Williams' FJ44-4A as the twinjet's powerplant.

Each FJ44-4A engine will provide 3,621 pounds of thrust, for a combined total of more than 7,200 pounds. With a projected mtow of 18,500 pounds, the light jet will achieve a 38.9% thrust-to-weight ratio, enabling strong climb performance and efficient high-altitude cruise SyberJet said. The SJ36's 4-foot-shorter predecessor, the FAA-certified SJ30-2, was fitted with two 2,300-pound-thrust FJ44-2A turbofans.

"Williams International is the clear choice for this program," said SyberJet CEO Trevor Milton. He acknowledged that there were other manufacturers to choose from, but ultimately the decision came down to his trust in the Williams engine family.

Gregg Williams, chairman and CEO of Williams International, said his company is honored to supply the engines. "The FJ44-4A offers unprecedented performance, exceptional durability and reliability, and the industry's best lifetime maintenance plan," he said. "It's a perfect match for the SJ36."

Milton added, "This partnership with Williams is more than just an engine deal—it's a shared vision for what the next generation of light jets should be."

The collaboration will also be highlighted in SyberJet's upcoming YouTube series documenting the SJ36's development. Produced in partnership with pilot and influencer Dave "Heavy D" Sparks, the series offers viewers an inside look at the aircraft certification process from design and testing to production. Milton said the goal is to make the process accessible to aviation enthusiasts and demonstrate "what it really takes to build a modern airplane."

Meanwhile, Milton said SyberJet's homegrown SyberVision avionics suite will feature secure over-the-air updates for databases and flight management software. The platform is said to include six high-definition touchscreens, integrated autothrottle, fly-by-wire controls, and enhanced weather systems.

"Our engineers and pilots have built an avionics package that's more capable and easier to use than anything else in its class," he said.

According to SyberJet, the SJ36 is engineered to bridge the gap between light and midsize jets, redefining expectations in the light-jet category. Performance and specifications include a Mach 0.88 top cruise speed, 3,000-nm range, and 49,000-foot service ceiling. Certification is targeted for 2032, with first flight expected by 2027.

GE Aerospace preps first Catalyst for Denali

The first production Catalyst turboprop engines are currently under construction at GE Aerospace's production facility in the Czech Republic, the company told **AIN** this week at NBAA-BACE 2025. GE's first in this class—a 1,300-shp engine—obtained FAA certification in February. Meanwhile, Textron Aviation expects to receive FAA certification of its Denali, which will serve as the Catalyst's launch platform, next year.

"Now we're transitioning into production readiness, getting the supply chain in place, getting the service infrastructure in place so we can support our customer, Beechcraft Denali," said Paul Corkery, the Catalyst general manager at GE Aerospace subsidiary Avio Aero.

He noted that the program has amassed more than 3,000 flight hours and 8,500 testing hours overall.

"We gave ourselves some very stringent performance targets when we started this program, fuel burn better than 15% or 18%, and then also bring in a fadec, and a fully dual redundant engine and prop controller in here as well," Corkery explained. "That's what's enabled us to hit these performance numbers." **C. E.**

CURT EPSTEIN

GE Aerospace's Catalyst turboprop engine

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Bizjet engine covers as easy as ‘Open Sesame’

Sesame Technologies returned to NBAA-BACE to showcase its unique engine cover technology that can be installed while standing on the ground through a specially designed pole, along with its latest GSE line.

The Washington, North Carolina-based company specializes in high-temperature aviation ground support solutions, designing and manufacturing a range of products to protect aircraft surfaces vulnerable to the elements while on ground, such as pitot probes and engines.

“Our engine covers are the first of their kind,” said general manager Ryan Woolard. “They’re the only mechanical jet engine covers that can be installed from the ground.”

Sesame’s collapsible Diamond Engine Shield EX is designed with materials such as carbon fiber, high-temperature silicones, and a synthetic outer layer. Installed via a pole, the shield auto-centers on the leading edge of the engine with silicone cushion pads.

The front bell mouth portion incorporates a glow-in-the-dark silicone pad to enable the pilot or ground handler to see the engagement point for the pole during nighttime operations.

To install, the person on the ground lifts the cover to the inlet via the pole. A rotation of the pole “auto indexes [the cover] on the leading edge and then arms pressurize against the inside of the nacelle. It’s a pinch force in a way,” explained Sam Jarvis, applications R&D engineer.

Sesame has developed different-length poles to accommodate varying aircraft heights. The poles attach to and lift the customized shields.

The fabric cover is available for aircraft such as those from Gulfstream, Bombardier, and Embraer, and the company is expanding applications, including legacy models. Sesame worked directly with Gulfstream to refine the product during development, according to Jarvis. Sesame brought the product to market three years ago. “We’re steadily getting more measurements for more aircraft, but now it’s starting to roll very well.”

The product is a key safety tool, he said. “We keep pilots off ladders. We eliminate falls. We eliminate workers’ comp claims, and we also make it easy to protect the most valuable component, the engine,” Jarvis said

The covers have been tested in a wind tunnel at wind speeds up to 80 miles per hour. “We’ve tested them. We’ve torture tested them. We’ve taken them to the local fire station and hit them with a 6-inch column of high-pressure water and tried to break it; we could not break it,” he said.

The fabric is water-resistant and can be customized with logos, aircraft registration numbers, or slogans.

Along with the Diamond Engine Shield, Sesame is highlighting its newly launched Gold Armor GSE at the show. “2025 has truly been a year of innovation at Sesame,” Woolard said

Sesame’s engine cover is uniquely designed for ease of installation from the ground, eliminating the need to climb on a ladder.

ALI’s Shervin Rezaie and Joe Vitulli.

Aircraft Lighting Intl’s latest lights brighten NBAA

Aircraft Lighting International (ALI) of Hauppauge, New York, is showcasing its recently FAA-approved three-wire RGBW LED cabin lighting system at NBAA-BACE 2025.

The system, which won FAA STC approval in August for the Gulfstream G550, can bathe aircraft cabins in any color light using a digital color wheel, or via preset lighting sequences for meal service, sleep periods, sunrise, sunset, or any other event. Compatible with Apple’s Siri via Bluetooth, the app-controlled system integrates with many cabin management systems.

ALI’s system lowers the energy consumption of legacy systems by up to a third, but its system has advantages even over other LED lighting technologies. “Other RGBW systems need a wire for each diode…so four for each diode, then a ground and the control,” explained Shervin Rezaie, director of sales. “Here we have half the number of wires, so less wire means less weight, less points of failure, less issues with maintenance.”

According to Rezaie, an FAA parts manufacturer approval will be issued for the system once the government reopens. In the meantime, via field approval, the system is now flying on Beechcraft King Airs, Dassault Falcons, Cessna Citations, and Boeing Business Jets.

Installation takes two or three days, and it is easily maintained by operators. “If something happens to one light, you just remove it and plug in a new one.” **C.E.**

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GE's turbofan ops tests leave others in the dust

By Matt Thurber

Designing and manufacturing turbine engines is an enormously complex process, and OEMs such as GE Aerospace deploy significant amounts of money and resources to deliver a reliable and maintainable product with the performance needed by aircraft manufacturer and operator customers.

One of the subtle factors that most aviation industry observers might not be aware of is the effect of dust on turbine engines. In certain environments, dust is a critical factor and can hamper operations and engine life.

To ensure that its engines can safely handle these conditions, GE runs operational dust-ingestion tests to optimize for durability. These tests were done on earlier programs, as well as the Leap, and more recently on the Rise program's high-pressure turbine airfoils.

According to GE, "Dust-ingestion testing uses a proprietary mix of sand and other particles developed by GE Aerospace." Ordinary sand and dust particles gathered from Middle East environments weren't suitable for engine testing, according to a GE spokesman, which is why the company needed to develop its own proprietary particles.

Once the particles are prepared, GE uses a specialized test rig to inject the dust into the engine during thousands of cycles of testing. This includes takeoff, climb, cruise, and landing. "The test campaign will replicate how the parts would withstand flight conditions in severe operating environments around the world, [which is] important for customer operations," according to GE.

In a YouTube video about Leap development, GE explained that, in the Middle East, "fine dust can block cooling holes in our high-pressure turbine blades, creating greater material stress when the engine runs hot. Turning on those conditions in a test cell turned out to be very, very difficult."

"You can't just go out into an environment where we have challenges in the Middle East, scoop up a little dust, and throw it into the engine," said Carlos Perez, general manager, services engineering. "It doesn't work that way."

Getting the GE-developed dust into the right place in the engine for the tests is difficult. "This is actually a critical scientific activity that took us 15 years and two PhD geologists to help us resolve." Ultimately, there were 14 iterations and thousands of hours of testing of various dust blends on earlier engines before GE perfected the blend.

GE Aerospace has put a lot of time and effort to test effects of dust inside its turbofan engines. This includes using a proprietary mix of sand and particles that took 15 years to perfect to replicate real-world operations in dusty environments.

Unique fail-safe pitot cover aims to save lives, money

For more than a century, pitot tube covers have remained largely unchanged—simple covers, some with red "remove before flight" streamers that rely on human attention. Steven DeGroff, president of DeGroff Aviation Technologies, set out to eliminate the risk that comes when one is accidentally left on during a flight.

"Human error will never end," DeGroff said. "So we have to design systems with technology in place to prevent hazards within the system itself." His heat-activated pitot cover does exactly that.

Traditional covers can melt or destroy the heated pitot tubes if heat is activated while they're still attached, leading to costly replacements and safety risks. "You may have three or four ruined pitot tubes…and you may have hundreds of thousands of dollars in costs, in time, and in materials," DeGroff said, depending on the aircraft type.

Beyond the financial hit, the stakes can be fatal. He cited a Bombardier Challenger 300 incident in Connecticut a few years ago in which pitot covers left on the aircraft contributed to a rejected takeoff. And when the sensors weren't properly reset before takeoff without the covers attached, subsequent in-flight oscillations injured and later killed a passenger.

DeGroff's invention uses a small glass bulb—similar to those used in fire sprinkler systems—inside a clamshell-style pitot cover. "Within two to five minutes after power up, it gets hot enough where it expands and shatters," he said. The mechanism causes the cover to spring open, freeing the pitot tube before any damage occurs.

Now offered to business jet OEMs and airlines, the DeGroff system's simplicity is its strength. "Nothing has changed in pitot cover technology for more than 100 years," DeGroff said. "This is the first fail-safe that keeps those covered-pitot events from happening." **A.W.**

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ACI Jet finishes CMS install on Challenger 605

By Matt Thurber

The maintenance team at ACI Jet has completed its first-article installation of a Cabin Management Solutions in-flight entertainment and cabin management system (CMS) on a Bombardier Challenger 605.

Both companies shared engineering and certification of the Cabin Management Solutions supplemental type certificate (STC), and they will share licensing rights for the STC that covers the Bombardier Challenger 605. The Model 604 and 650 can also get the same upgrade but will require deviation packages and drawings from Cabin Management Solutions. The companies are also examining opportunities to offer a similar upgrade for Bombardier Globals.

With the upgrade, Challenger owners and operators get Cabin Management Solutions' Elite 4K video, Elevate high-resolution audio, and Evolve cabin management system, with dual 24-inch monitors, a new digital audio amplifier, speakers, and dual high-power subwoofers. The user interface employs wireless touchscreen switches that are also customizable and require no panel or woodwork removal. During the installation, ACI Jet is also adding a Starlink satcom system to the Challenger.

Meanwhile, in a move that will make its parts inventory easily available online, ACI Jet is implementing the SalesEdge Commerce platform developed by Camp Systems' Inventory Locator Service. Once ACI Jet implements SalesEdge in the first quarter, its OEM and aftermarket parts inventory will be available for purchase by aircraft operators, brokers, and maintenance providers.

ACI Jet is also implementing Camp Systems ILS' SalesEdge Commerce platform.

Based in San Luis Obispo, California, ACI Jet is a Bombardier-authorized service facility, and its ACI Jet Parts is the only Bombardier parts depot on the West Coast. "SalesEdge Commerce gives our customers exactly what they've been asking for—simple, secure access to certified inventory backed by a service team they trust," said ACI Jet parts manager Kari Mobley.

Bombardier locks down order for Global 6500 and 8000 from Sojitz

Bombardier received an order from Japanese trading company and business jet provider Sojitz for a Global 6500 and Global 8000, Bombardier announced yesterday morning at NBAA-BACE 2025. They will be used to launch Share Jet Program (SJP), Japan's first shared ownership program for large, ultra-long-range business jets.

"The collaboration between our companies underscores a mutual dedication to advancing business aviation in Japan and Asia, connecting cities with greater speed and efficiency," said Éric Martel, president and CEO of Bombardier.

Yohei Sakurai of Sojitz said the selection of the Globals was driven by the company's extensive experience operating Bombardier aircraft in Japan. "Their proven aircraft platforms and quality of service make them the ideal foundation for launching Japan's first large-jet, shared-ownership program," he said.

SJP worked with Bombardier on one-of-a-kind interiors to deliver "an unparalleled experience" in cabin design and craftsmanship. **E.T.**

Sojitz will use two Bombardier Globals to launch 'Share Jet Program,' a shared ownership program for large, ultra-long-range bizjets.

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GE recently shipped its 500th Passport engine to Bombardier for installation on a Global 8000.

GE preps Passport for Global 8000 liftoff

By Curt Epstein

GE Aerospace reached a milestone with the shipment of its 500th Passport engine. That unit also represents the first for the Bombardier Global 8000 that GE has shipped since it received FAA and Transport Canada authorization on the powerplant. EASA approval is pending.

Set to succeed the Global 7500 as Bombardier's flagship, the Global 8000 is expected to be certified by year-end and will offer speeds of up to Mach 0.95 and a range of up to 8,000 nm.

The 19,000-pound-thrust Passport 20 powers both variants but was modified to enable the enhanced performance over the Global 7500's 7,700-nm range and Mach 0.925 Mmo. GE executives have described the updates primarily as software alterations rather than "turbo-machinery" changes, unlocking potential already built into the engine.

This includes improving specific fuel consumption to enable the Global 8000's longer range, which is also enabled by the upgrade of the ratings plug. "It literally is a plug with pins in it that you screw into the Fadec," said Melvyn Heard, business aviation general manager for GE's commercial engines and services business. "This, combined with the software update, gives you the capabilities for the engine to get the capability of a Global 8000."

Going forward, all of the Passport engines will be configured thusly, and Bombardier will issue a service bulletin that will allow its Global 7500 customers to upgrade their engines to the 8000 standard.

Entering service in 2018, the Passport now equips more than 220 Global 7500s, the fastest business jet. The engine has amassed more than 600,000 hours in service, with 200,000 cycles and a 99.9% dispatch reliability. "It's hard to believe even after being in service for almost 7 years now, we are still the most fuel-efficient engine in its class, even though new products have been certified", said Heard.

In **AIN**'s annual product support survey, the Passport scored highest among business jet engines this year, while its maker retained the top spot for product support.

"When you look at what we've done with this engine, we always envisioned that there would be greater capacity that the program would need," Heard told **AIN**. "What we've been doing since we launched the program is make sure that capability was in there, so now we can take advantage of us overdelivering on fuel efficiency of the engine, having thrust capability in the engine, as well as the reliability that customers are looking for, and now all that has already been built in."

GE assembles the Passport at its Lafayette, Indiana facility alongside the commercial LEAP engine, and in terms of production, it is capable of meeting Bombardier's needs from a capacity standpoint, according to Heard.

He noted that more than 75% of its engine customers are enrolled in its OnPoint maintenance services program, which monitors engine data to manage engine health. "Imagine a fleet of Passport engines out there streaming a terabyte of data at any point in time," he stated.

"We can now gather insights from that data coming in and be able to push that back out to our customers to help them proactively manage their fleets. When we see an anomaly on one engine, we can understand if that is a unique thing that happened on that engine or if there's something more fleetwide we need to go understand."

This week at NBAA-BACE 2025, the engine maker is highlighting its FlightPulse subscription software application, which is now approaching 60,000 users, an increase of 156% since 2022. That number is expected to climb higher as new customers, such as NetJets, are onboarded.

Created by GE's software as a service (SaaS) team, the app contains pre- and post-flight modules to inform a pilot's experience through all stages of flight as part of their electronic flight bag. It gives pilots safety and fuel insights on their own flight data, as well as anonymized safety data sharing from across the industry.

"FlightPulse has become one of those 'must-have' apps, as more and more pilots recognize how insights from their own flight data can help them become better pilots," said Andrew Coleman, president and general manager of GE's SaaS division.

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FAA OKs Blackhawk engine upgrade for TBM 700

The FAA approved Blackhawk's XP66D engine upgrade for the Daher TBM 700 that provides a 21% increase in power and can climb to FL310 in 22 minutes.

By Matt Thurber

Blackhawk Group has received FAA approval for its XP66D engine upgrade for the Daher TBM 700, which replaces the original 700-shp Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6A-64 with the 850-shp PT6A-66D.

At Blackhawk's Waco, Texas headquarters, the first installation is underway, and a second is scheduled at Blackhawk's Avex Performance Center in Broomfield, Colorado. The certification TBM 700 is a 2004 C2 model that showcases all of the company's capabilities with new Garmin avionics, custom paint, and a fresh interior.

With the 21% increase in power, the XP66D-upgraded TBM 700 can climb to FL310 in 22 minutes, shaving six minutes off the original model's performance. Cruise speed is up by an average of 25 ktas, to 303 ktas.

"The approval and first installation of the XP66D engine upgrade represents a landmark achievement for Blackhawk and for TBM 700 operators worldwide," said Edwin Black, president of Blackhawk's proprietary upgrades division. "By combining our proven expertise in STC development with the unmatched TBM knowledge of our Avex Performance Centers, we're delivering a truly transformative upgrade that maximizes the capability and value of the TBM 700."

Meanwhile, Blackhawk is launching at NBAA-BACE a new STC program to add an electrically heated anti-ice boot on the Piper Meridian elevator horn gap. This is the same solution that Piper uses for the M600 and M700 turboprop singles and prevents ice from forming between the elevator horn and horizontal stabilizer.

"If left unchecked, ice accumulation in this area can restrict elevator movement, a condition that previously required pilots to periodically 'shake the tail' by moving the elevators," according to Blackhawk. "This upgrade delivers a major safety benefit to legacy Meridian operators and brings the fleet in line with the modern ice-protection standards already available on newer Piper platforms."

Under a recent partnership with Hartzell Propeller, the manufacturer's Top Prop propellers will be available from Blackhawk and Avex Performance Centers. This also adds Blackhawk as a dealer for Hartzell's Tanis Aircraft Products preheat systems.

MARIANO ROSALES

Just a Piper dream

Unveiled in April 2024, Piper Aircraft's M700 Fury is now the company's flagship turboprop single. The aircraft shines in blue and black at the static display here in Las Vegas.

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Honeywell inks JetWaveX deal with Gulfstream

By Curt Epstein

Gulfstream is now the latest airframer to partner with Honeywell Aerospace on the certification of the JetWaveX in-flight connectivity system. Under the deal announced this week at NBAA-BACE, Honeywell will work with the Savannah, Georgia-based OEM to certify the Jetwave X platform—the successor to the manufacturer's JetWave system—for the GIV, GV, G450, G550, G600, G650, and G700.

Bombardier and Dassault previously signed similar agreements with Honeywell, and the first installation of the Ka-band system is currently underway on Honeywell's Falcon 900 demonstrator. "We just have to finish the STC now," said Honeywell Aerospace president of services and connectivity Jason Wissink.

"I think Dassault may be the first out of the gate in terms of availability, and then I expect Gulfstream and Bombardier to be right behind," he added. "I expect the majority of the large-cabin fleets will have availability by the end of next year."

According to Wissink, aftermarket installations will begin through the OEM's factory-authorized service centers as system upgrades before becoming forward-fit installations.

For those upgrades, Honeywell designed the system to use much of the existing infrastructure. "The line-replaceable units themselves will change, but what we're really focused on reusing is the radome," Wissink told **AIN**.

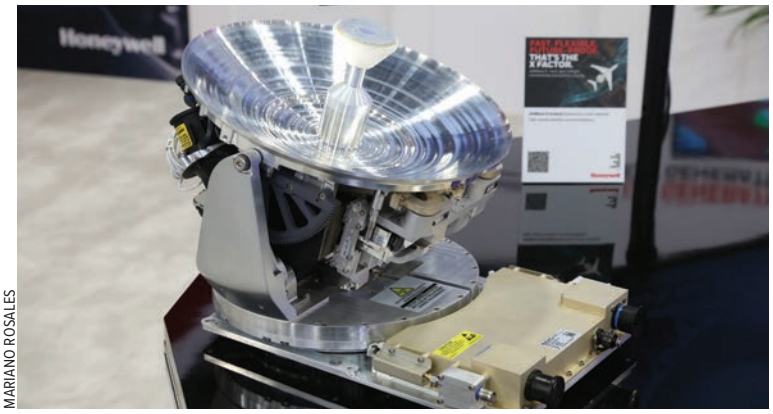
"We wanted people to be able to reuse that and then as much wiring and connectors as possible, so that you don't have to fully rerun all the wires if you already have an existing JetWave system; you have a very economical upgrade path." Indeed, those savings could be hundreds of thousands of dollars.

JetWave X is configured to access Viasat's existing GX and Viasat satellite constellations, but it was designed to avoid the technological obsolescence of past systems.

"The system is provisioned to handle the full Ka frequency range, so that down the road, if a new satellite constellation launches that is applicable to business aviation, and it's in the Ka frequency—which a lot of the new capacity is—we will have the technical ability to interface with those as well," explained Wissink.

Honeywell's new platform will retain the same 24/7 support and, in addition to improved connection speeds of up to 200 megabits per second, will also offer financial benefits. "You're going to get an economic improvement on the price of your service plans, your monthly fees will go down, so you're getting more performance for less cost," said Wissink.

Among the first to install the system will be Florida-based charter provider Slate Aviation, which will feature JetWave X high-speed connectivity in its fleet of 35 Bombardier CRJ-200s and Challenger 850s. Through its Part 145 repair arm, Slate will develop its own STC for those aircraft. ▮



MARIANO ROSALES

Under a newly forged deal, Gulfstream is partnering with Honeywell to certify JetWaveX on the GIV, G450, GV, G550, G600, G650/650ER, and G700.

International trip supporter CST is the latest to join IBAC as an industry partner.

CST Flight Services signs on as IBAC industry partner

The International Business Aviation Council (IBAC) has added CST Flight Services to its Industry Partner Program as an Associate Member. Based in Miami, CST provides international trip support for business aviation operators traveling in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America, helping them navigate complex requirements of foreign airports.

The Industry Partner Program provides a forum for business aviation organizations to offer insight on critical safety and other industry issues. IBAC director general Kurt Edwards said, "The program continues to grow, and we are excited to welcome CST Flight Services on board. We look forward to CST's participation with IBAC as we further develop global business aviation safety standards and our global mission to advocate for our industry's growth and sustainability."

CST Flight Services joins about two dozen global companies from a spectrum of business aviation that have signed on to the program. "We look forward to working closely with the IBAC team. As a recognized voice of the global business aviation sector, IBAC is uniquely positioned to drive collaboration needed to address the challenges and opportunities facing our industry," said Rick Gardner, director of CST Flight Services. "We are pleased to expand focus on Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean and to support IBAC's mission." **K.L.**

Aloft wins contract for VVIP cabin

By Amy Wilder

BARRY AMBROSE

As part of a VVIP interior completion, Aloft AeroArchitects will integrate advanced systems for passenger comfort and connectivity into a Boeing BBJ Max 8.

Aloft AeroArchitects has been awarded the contract to perform a VVIP interior completion on a Boeing BBJ Max 8. The project will be carried out at the company's hangar facility in Wilmington, Delaware.

Under the agreement, Aloft will oversee every aspect of the customized interior, integrating advanced systems for passenger comfort and connectivity. The project will be certified under Aloft's in-house Organization Designation Authorization, enabling FAA approval directly through the company.

"We're truly honored to be selected as the completion partner by a savvy aircraft owner who has outfitted and operated several VVIP narrow- and widebody aircraft over the years," said Matt Hill, Aloft's v-p of sales and marketing. "He values the experience, capabilities, quality, and dedicated project focus he will receive at Aloft...Once delivered, the aircraft will be amongst the most elegant and well-equipped in operation."

As with all Boeing Business Jet Maxs, the aircraft will include Aloft's auxiliary fuel system (AFS), installed in the forward and aft cargo compartments. The modular AFS increases the BBJ Max 8's range by up to 50%—to nearly 6,700 nm.

Aloft will host the 2026 RedCabin Business Jet and VIP Interior Innovation Summit from Sept. 22 to 24, 2026, in Dewey Beach, Delaware. The event will highlight advancements in cabin design, sustainability, and technology.

AeroMech has now developed six Starlink STCs this year, including the two Citation models.

MATT THURBER

FAA OKs Starlink for Latitude and Longitude

By Matt Thurber

Engineering and certification specialist AeroMech has received FAA supplemental type certificate (STC) approval for installation of SpaceX Starlink satcom systems in the Textron Aviation Cessna Citation Latitude and Longitude. The STCs are available for authorized Starlink dealers, including AeroMech subsidiary AMI Aviation Services, to schedule equipment purchases and installations.

More than 8,000 Starlink satellites in low-earth orbit (LEO) deliver global high-speed and low-latency broadband airborne connectivity from the ground to all altitudes.

The Starlink electronically steered antenna is mounted on top of the airplane's fuselage, and the installation includes a power supply and wireless access points. Starlink's published speeds range from 40 to 220 Mbps for downloading and 8 to 25 Mbps for uploading. Service prices range from $2,000 per month for 20 GB, plus $100 per additional gigabyte, to $10,000 per month for unlimited data.

AeroMech has received six Starlink STCs during 2025, and AMI has completed more than 40 Starlink installations at its Orlando and Nashville facilities. Mobile teams are also available to complete installations at customer sites.

During an NBAA-BACE demo flight of Starlink from Henderson Executive Airport on October 14, eight passengers ran dozens of devices connected to the Starlink system in a Citation Sovereign+ owned by electrical contractor Jason Bryan. This reporter ran a laptop, iPad, and iPhone simultaneously, playing a movie on the iPad, downloading a large file on the laptop, and livestreaming the flight on Facebook with the iPhone. The connectivity was smooth and fast, with none of the passengers reporting any dropouts, and download speeds reached nearly 400 Mbps.

"I use the hell out of it," Bryan said during the flight. "It works better than my Wi-Fi at my house." He said he flies the Sovereign+ about 20 days a month for business. "It's just a fast system, and doesn't matter how many people are using it. I've never had a dead spot," he said.

STCs developed by AeroMech are available for a variety of aircraft, including de Havilland Dash 8s, Beechcraft King Airs, the Citation X, Excel/XLS series, Sovereigns, Latitudes, and Longitudes, and Cessna Caravans.

"Starlink is redefining what flight crews and passengers expect from in-flight connectivity," said AeroMech COO Anthony Wiederkehr. "Our team's ability to deliver certified, turnkey Starlink solutions, quickly and reliably, underscores AeroMech's commitment to advancing technology integration across the entire spectrum of business aviation."

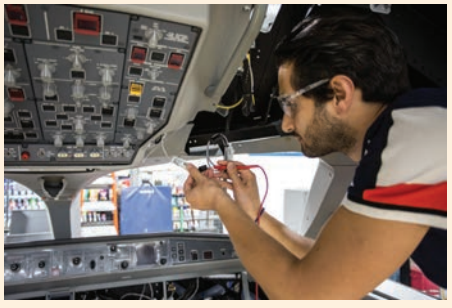
CAE makes technician training more flexible

CAE is introducing flexibility and digital tools across its aircraft maintenance technician training programs as the industry faces mounting workforce pressures and an evolving learning environment. An online booking platform, debuting this week at NBAA-BACE 2025, also allows customers to reserve training slots online.

The maintenance technician shortage is a real puzzle, acknowledged David Bienvenu, CAE's global leader for maintenance training. "For every 10,000 that are retiring, only 7,000 people are joining the workforce," Bienvenu said.

The 2025 CAE Aviation Talent forecast backs this up, predicting a need for 69,000 aircraft maintenance personnel in the business aviation sector alone by 2034. Bienvenu noted that as many as 20% to 40% of technicians are over the age of 55, leaving operators with fewer mentors for new hires, and shifting the traditional balance of experience on the hangar floor.

CAE now offers three training formats:



in-person sessions at its centers, instructor-led hybrid courses connecting virtual and classroom learners, and onsite instruction at customer facilities. **A.W.**

FlyHouse snaps up Los Angeles FBO Sun Air Jets

Atlanta-based charter operator and broker FlyHouse has expanded to the Los Angeles area.

MARIANO ROSALES

By Curt Epstein

Atlanta-based aircraft charter operator and broker FlyHouse is expanding its operation with the purchase of Los Angeles-area FBO and charter fleet operator Sun Air Jets, the company announced on Tuesday at NBAA-BACE 2025. The transaction represents a strategic expansion of FlyHouse's maintenance management and operational capabilities as it looks to build a vertically integrated aviation platform.

Included in the acquisition is Sun Air's Part 135 charter certificate, which will add approximately a dozen aircraft to FlyHouse's charter fleet, ranging from the Gulfstream G650ER to the Beechcraft King Air 360ER. It will also integrate Sun Air's Argus Platinum, IS-BAO, and Wyvern Wingman safety ratings, strengthening the company's commitment to operational safety and regulatory compliance.

Additionally, the purchase will give FlyHouse its own maintenance capability for the first time with a Part 145 repair station, as well as its first FBO, at California's Camarillo Airport (KCMA). Sun Air also has a presence at Van Nuys Airport (KVNY).

The expanded footprint will provide FlyHouse with more efficient aircraft servicing, crew operations, and client support on the West Coast. More than 100 Sun Air staffers will be retained in the transition.

"Our agreement to acquire Sun Air Jets represents a defining move in FlyHouse's growth," said CEO Jack E. Lambert. "Owning a Part 145 repair station, an expanded fleet, and premier facilities at Van Nuys and Camarillo fundamentally changes our capacities."

He added, "We've built FlyHouse to be the first ecosystem brand in private aviation—one that owns its infrastructure, integrates technology at every level, and delivers a service experience that's seamless end-to-end."

FlyExclusive climbs with focused strategy

By Amy Wilder

FlyExclusive reported $91.3 million in second-quarter revenue, highlighting growth in its fractional and jet club charter membership programs along with significant fleet optimization. Company CEO Jim Segrave said the company's results reflect "a rapid transformation of the business that we've been working on for 18 months now." The improvements, he added, "seem to be continuing very nicely—maybe even accelerating."

Over the past year and a half, FlyExclusive has reduced its number of nonperforming aircraft from 37 to 13. "We evaluate that on a P&L based on all the airplane's activity," Segrave explained. He noted that better parts availability and overnight maintenance have improved reliability and returns to service.

Despite operating with 10% fewer aircraft, FlyExclusive flew 12% more total flight hours in the second quarter. Segrave attributed the gain to a disciplined approach to aircraft reliability and utilization, noting that "if you really want to be great, you do maintenance overnight when people aren't using the airplanes."

Originally intended to support the company's fleet, FlyExclusive's maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) and paint and interior businesses have evolved into revenue generators.

"We got into the MRO business to be able to control our destiny and do our own maintenance. But it's become a profit center," Segrave said. "Our paint and interior businesses were largely done to take care of our fleet," he said. "We need to do 33 airplanes a year just to keep up with our fleet. That's why I can justify a paint and interior shop just for that business."

Now, outside customers account for much of the demand. "Our fleet only represents about 25% of the overall demand. Seventy-five percent of our paint business, for instance, is outside customers. We are sold out of our capacity to March at this point," he explained.

Jim Segrave , CEO

Looking ahead, Segrave said the company plans to "start to build the fleet size fairly rapidly" after removing underperforming aircraft. "The trend of improvement is continuing," he noted, adding that the third quarter has continued the positive growth trend.

He credited the company's expansion in MRO services, along with strong demand from both air charter members and wholesale partners, for sustaining momentum.

AEG Fuels Connect gets more Velocity with addition of three FBOs

AEG Fuels has expanded its AEG Connect-branded dealer network with the addition of all three members of the growing Velocity FBO network. Included are locations at Detroit-area Willow Run Airport (KYIP), St. Simons Island Airport (KSSI) in Georgia, and Kissimmee Gateway Airport (KISM) in Florida.

Each has its unique strengths. At KYIP, Velocity supports large aircraft and charter operations with heated hangars, deicing, and 24/7 access, while at KSSI, it offers general aviation's only combination FBO and hotel with premium amenities such as a pool and an onsite concierge. In Central Florida, the company provides essential aviation services to the bustling Orlando market.

"We have always considered AEG a valued partner even prior to this official agreement," said Velocity CEO Chad Farischon. "This partnership is a natural evolution of the strong relationship we've built over time."

The Velocity FBO at Florida's Kissimmee Gateway Airport has joined the AEG Fuels Connect Network, alongside two other Velocity facilities in Georgia and Michigan.

Concurrent with its joining the AEG network, Velocity has officially rebranded with a new logo and refreshed identity reflecting its forward momentum and vision for future growth.

"Velocity FBO Group has built a reputation for excellence, and we're proud to welcome them to the AEG Connect Network," said AEG senior executive v-p of general aviation Kurt Brulisauer. "This partnership reflects the kind of quality and shared values we look for in our network."

With more than 35 years of fueling and logistics experience, AEG launched its Connect-branded dealer network at NBAA-BACE 2022. These latest additions bring it to 43 locations. **C.E.**

Stevens finalizes Gogo Galileo HDX STC for King Air

By Amy Wilder

MARIANO ROSALES

Stevens Aerospace and Defense Systems executives say STC approval for the Gogo Galileo HDX connectivity system on Beechcraft 200- and 300-series Kings Airs is imminent.

Stevens Aerospace and Defense Systems has completed all work and flight testing for its FAA supplemental type certificate (STC) covering the Gogo Galileo HDX global high-speed internet system for Beechcraft King Air 200s and 300s. FAA issuance of the STC is expected later this month.

The initial certification will include multiple avionics configurations and integrates onboard Wi-Fi activation for simplified installation. Stevens' FAA-approved STC will also include validations with EASA, Canada's TCAA, and Brazil's ANAC, and be available for sale either with installation or as a standalone authorization.

Developed in partnership with Gogo Business Aviation and Peregrine Aerospace, the installation brings satellite-based global broadband to King Air operators using Eutelsat-OneWeb's low-earth-orbit network. The Galileo HDX antenna delivers download speeds up to 60 Mbps and upload speeds up to 11 Mbps worldwide. During Stevens' final flight tests, six users streamed heavy content simultaneously while using only half of the system's capacity.

The new system can also be added to existing Gogo Avance platforms—including L3, L5, LX5, and SCS—offering connectivity beyond North America. Additional Avance capabilities, such as over-the-air software updates, remote diagnostics, and high-speed ground connectivity, extend functionality beyond traditional air-to-ground systems.

"As the leading King Air MRO, we are excited to bring this new technology from a long-standing aviation connectivity provider to our King Air customers around the world," said Stevens director of avionics Rob Reed.

ACJ: Bizjets integral to biz growth

By Kerry Lynch

U.S. corporations are increasingly focusing on how their aircraft can help them run their businesses, new research commissioned by Airbus Corporate Jets found. Researchers surveyed U.S. companies with annual revenues of more than $500 million, with results revealing that 83% have increased both domestic and intercontinental business travel.

In making purchase decisions, 67% cited new tax incentives (i.e. bonus depreciation) adopted by the U.S. Congress this year as a reason for purchasing aircraft, while 63% emphasized focus on operational costs, and 59% on newer/better/more efficient models. Also, 51% said they are looking to upgrade to models that can make greater use of sustainable fuel, and 41% cited a need for bigger aircraft.

"This research reinforces the importance U.S. companies are placing on efficiency, sustainability, and productivity from business aviation," said Airbus Corporate Jets president Chadi Saade. "With advances in sustainable fuels, optimized fleet management, and new-generation aircraft, the sector is well-positioned to meet the needs of companies looking to expand responsibility while ensuring their employees' productivity and well-being."

Airbus Corporate Jets believes that its ACJ TwoTwenty is well positioned in the marketplace.

BARRY AMBROSE

The study found a growing link between business aviation and sustainability, with nine in 10 firms interviewed indicating that they were investing more in fleet management technology to optimize routes and reduce fuel burn. Also, 90% of charter users are prioritizing newer, more efficient aircraft.

Nearly nine in 10 believe that more affordable and easier access to sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) would boost sales. The same amount believe that SAF use will grow over the next five years.

Researchers also surveyed business aviation financiers and brokers, finding that nine in 10 expect the market to grow over the next two years, with 11% predicting strong growth. Some 77% believe business aviation financing access will increase in the next three years, providing more options for fleet upgrades.

Meanwhile, 93% believe finance rates will become more attractive, and 80% expect demand for fixed-rate floating structures to rise. Financiers and brokers also believe sales of large business jets will increase over the next five years (89%), and 84% see the trend towards midsize and larger jets strengthening.

Airbus Corporate Jets believes that these findings reinforce the underpinnings for its ACJ TwoTwenty. "This study confirms what we are seeing in the market: U.S. corporations are not only using business aviation more frequently, they are also looking to upgrade to larger, more capable aircraft," Saade said. "Airbus Corporate Jets is proud to be at the forefront of this shift with aircraft such as the ACJ TwoTwenty, designed to meet the evolving requirements of corporate America."

Levo Aero, Portside partner to integrate AI tools for air charter

Levo Aero has partnered with Portside to link its AI-driven charter tools with the latter's BART platform, offering operators a more efficient way to market aircraft and manage air charter activity in real-time. The collaboration strengthens Portside's technical integration capabilities and expand its customer base.

Through the partnership, all Portside BART users will be able to connect directly with Levo's suite of products and automatically list available aircraft and empty legs on Levo's consumer-facing marketplace. Thus, vetted subscribers will have access to operator-specific pricing and flight options while maintaining direct relationships with charter providers.

Levo Aero, led by longtime charter executive Joe Moeggenberg, has introduced proprietary AI tools within its enterprise resource planning system, including SmartInbox, a feature that streamlines communication and helps optimize empty-leg scheduling. "The industry is rapidly evolving, requiring more sophisticated, efficient approaches to meet operational demands," Moeggenberg said.

Portside associate director of business development Grey East said the integration will enhance connectivity for operators. "By connecting directly to Levo's marketplace and leveraging its AI-powered tools, our customers gain more control, efficiency, and access to high-quality demand while continuing to manage their operations on the platform they know and trust," he said. **A.W.**

Bombardier evolving in Wichita with busy U.S. HQ

By Kerry Lynch

Bombardier is modiying the seventh Persistent German Airborne Surveillance System (PEGASUS) signals intelligence aircraft, based on the Global 6000, at its center in Wichita.

As Bombardier ramps up focus on its U.S. network of service centers—most recently with last week's announced plans to expand in Indiana—its expansive site at Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport (KICT) continues to extend its reach and add more capabilities. After it shuttered the Learjet lines in March 2022, Bombardier made the strategic decision to establish Wichita as its U.S. headquarters, building up its MRO base, growing its defense business, and reinforcing its flight activities.

The campus encompasses 1.2 million sq ft of hangar space to accommodate those activities, and all of that is filled. Bombardier's oldest and largest repair station, the MRO comprises seven hangars—up from three less than a decade ago. This provides the company space to ensure it has availability in its largest hangars to accommodate its Global lines—the 7500 has a 104-foot wingspan and a 27-foot tail height—along with Challenger and Learjet maintenance.

Bombardier has set aside hangars for a large fractional customer, as well as for AOG aircraft. But it also has plenty of ramp space should overflow capacity be necessary.

The site has undergone numerous changes over the years. Global completions were there for a few years before shifting back to Montreal in 2021, for instance.

"From a footprint perspective, the site is at capacity, but that square footage changes based on the use. So, we're constantly evolving," said Mitch Dishman, general manager of the Wichita Service Center.

Despite ending production and returning the completion services to Montreal, work has not been an issue as the services business has grown. Many of the Learjet production workers, who know the product best, were pulled over to support. The defense business has built up, requiring more specialists.

Dishman estimated that the services business alone has close to 500 technicians—not including defense and flight-test work—but is continuing to hire.

However, he stressed, "We've been fortunate this year. We've been able to attract really good talent, so our recruiting events have been very successful. The reputation both locally and just across the industry is very positive, so we actually have people asking us to come here as opposed to us necessarily going and recruiting. That's been an amazing thing."

To standardize its training throughout its network and better prepare incoming workers, Bombardier converted a delivery center into a training center that will provide hands-on experience before new hires enter the shop floor.

"We've actually cut up an entire aircraft, and we're going to use actual aircraft parts and systems," he said. "We're working with a lot of different people in the company to build up a ready-to-work program so that all the technicians will come here. It will teach all the dos and don'ts on actual aircraft components and systems before they even step foot on the floor, so they get all of that right up front."

As for capacity, Dishman noted that there would be room to expand if necessary. "There is space at the airport, which is managed by the city. We have a really good relationship with them as well."

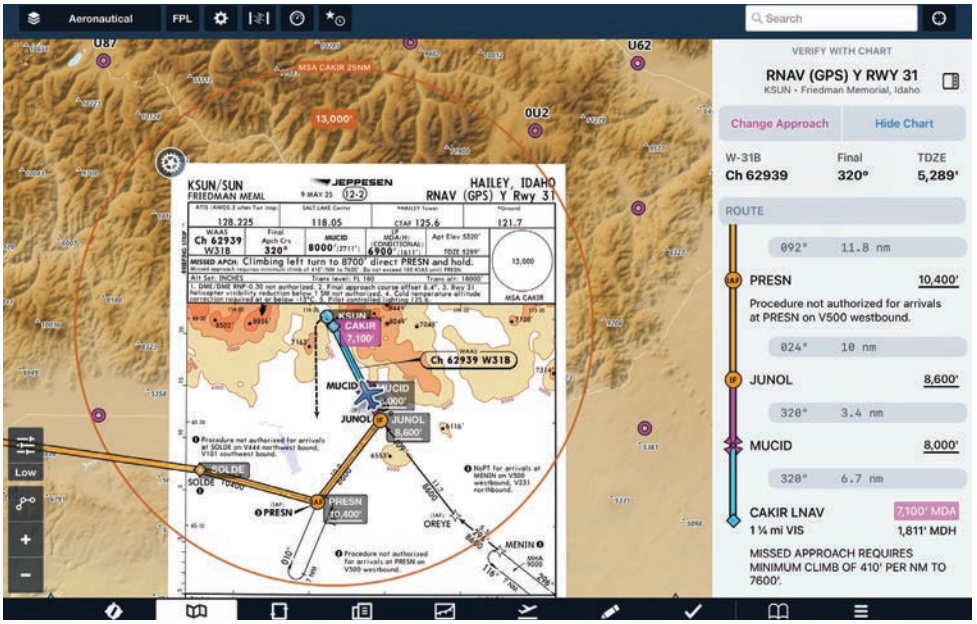
Wichita has served as a center for its MRO business with clients coming from around the globe, many based on the long-established relationships built over the years. "People come from all over the world. It truly is unlimited," Dishman said, pointing to an aircraft in the hangar at the time with a YL (Latvian) registration.

"Some customers like coming to Wichita because they like the city or they like working with the team. This business is relationship-based, so where you have the best relationship is where you're going to go."

While he noted that customers have their preferences, he stressed that Bombardier has focused on standardizing their services so customers can have the same experience no matter where they are or who they are working with on a project.

A new approach to approaches

By Matt Thurber



ForeFlight's Dynamic Procedures changes how pilots interact with terminal procedures.

Since launching Dynamic Procedures in early August, the take-up rate of the new feature among business aviation users of ForeFlight's electronic flight bag has exceeded all expectations. ForeFlight demonstrated the new approach procedures at EAA AirVenture Oshkoksh in July, and Dynamic Procedures went live shortly afterwards.

NBAA-BACE will be the first business aviation-focused show where ForeFlight is demonstrating Dynamic Procedures and getting feedback from early adopters, according to product marketing manager Simpson Bennett. He initially expected the business aviation take-up rate to be slower because most flight operations have formal workflows, standard operating procedures, and other constraints that could require some extra work to incorporate such a change.

"They've exceeded any kind of expectation," he said. "We've been very happy with that [and] have heard great feedback." Dynamic Procedures are just for the U.S. and Canada, but ForeFlight is looking to make them available in other countries, according to Bennett.

Dynamic Procedures are just one of the recent changes to the ForeFlight Mobile app, although it is a major update to how pilots interact with terminal procedures. Also on tap for BACE visitors is helping them learn about ForeFlight's runway analysis tool, which is seeing further additions of aircraft and airport engine-out procedures.

Runway analysis allows pilots to fly with the maximum payload possible while meeting terrain- and obstacle-clearance requirements in case of loss of one engine during the takeoff phase of flight.

Based on feedback from users, ForeFlight is developing more features for the engine-out procedures. Bennett said, "We're working on on some updates. I don't have a timeframe of when they might be available."

ForeFlight's graphical weight-and-balance tool is also gaining in popularity. "We're hearing more and more it's just an easier way of inputting data," he said. This is especially true when a pilot is faced with that all-too-common situation where the passengers show up with extra luggage or even extra people, and the weight and balance needs to be recalculated. "That throws you for a loop on your weight-and-balance figures," he said.

While some pilots still aren't comfortable using ForeFlight for international flight planning, the mobile app and Dispatch service are quite capable, especially in European airspace. "If you're flying to Europe, we do the validation for you," Bennett said. ForeFlight will also populate routes that have been cleared and based on the user's parameters, then tag it as Eurocontrol-approved. Additionally, the company can help with eAPIS integration for customers returning to the U.S.

VanAllen acquires bizav specialist Essex

Business aviation consulting firm VanAllen has acquired Essex Aviation, a specialist in business aircraft transactions, charter, fractional ownership, membership and card programs, and financing.

Led by founder and CEO Lee Rohde, the Essex Aviation team has been advising clients about VanAllen's travel solutions for a decade. The two companies share an "unwavering commitment to creating value for their clients," according to VanAllen. "That alignment made this acquisition an easy decision and an exciting step forward for both teams and the clients they serve."

"Our number-one core value is doing good for our clients," said VanAllen CEO Jeff Agur. "Lee and the Essex team embody that same principle. We've admired their work for years, and we're thrilled to bring our expertise together in a way that multiplies the good we offer to our clients."

The combination of the two companies will strengthen VanAllen's capabilities, which include strategic planning, aircraft transactions, operational best practices, and leadership development.

"This is not a conclusion of Essex's long history," said Rohde. "It's a continuation, an expansion." **M.T.**

(l-r) SkyMark Refuelers CEO Steven Paul, World Fuel Services v-p of sales Stephanie Jordan, and Clay Lacy Aviation's Doug Wilson pose by the largest all-electric refueler in the U.S..

SkyMark, Clay Lacy go big with EV refueler

By Curt Epstein

SkyMark Refuelers unveiled the largest aircraft refueler in the U.S. with an all-electric powertrain on Tuesday at NBAA-BACE 2025. Launched in combination with World Fuel Services and Clay Lacy Aviation, the 7,000-gallon-capacity tanker will be delivered to Clay Lacy's flagship FBO at California's Van Nuys Airport (KVNY) at the conclusion of the show and will be used to carry sustainable aviation fuel (SAF).

Doug Wilson, Clay Lacy's chief business officer for FBOs, noted the irony of FBOs using a conventionally powered refueler with its exhaust emissions to haul and dispense SAF. He added that this was a factor in the company's decision to acquire the fully electric vehicle.

"Since establishing our sustainability program in 2019, we have continually sought new ways to drive the industry forward and support our company's environmental goals," he said. "This impressively engineered refueler sets a new standard in all-electric ground service equipment and allows us to best serve our clients while being a good neighbor to the communities surrounding our airports."

The vehicle is powered by a 240-kW battery, which SkyMark estimates will supply enough power for it to dispense two full truckloads of fuel and drive 20 miles before requiring an overnight charge. It carries SkyMark's Gen 2 control system, which provides safety cutoffs and monitors conditions such as battery temperature.

If it detects any parameter approaching exceedance, it will generate a warning to the operator. If those parameters become dangerous, the control system will shut the vehicle down. Qualified under National Fire Protection Association 407—the standard for aircraft fuel serving—the refueler was designed with safety as its primary concern, according to the manufacturer.

"Working alongside World Fuel Services and Clay Lacy Aviation, we are excited to introduce this next-generation EV refueler to the market," said SkyMark CEO Steven Paul. "This partnership represents a shared commitment to innovation, sustainability, and delivering safe, efficient fueling solutions for the aviation industry."

Crew Chiefs launches global bizav maintenance response network

Business aircraft technical solutions provider Crew Chiefs has launched TechConnect, a global alliance network designed to provide swift worldwide access to maintenance services and support. Through TechConnect, the company has established strategic relationships with leading regional service centers and with MRO facilities across Asia-Pacific, Europe, India, the Middle East, Africa, and the Americas.

Crew Chiefs' network offers swift response times for AOG maintenance.

It provides one-call access to AOG recovery, remote maintenance, logistics coordination, augmented lift, and technical support, offering operators immediate solutions at their aircraft's location, anywhere in the world. By integrating trusted regional expertise within a unified worldwide network, TechConnect offers faster response times, improved service continuity, and broad technical reach.

For Crew Chiefs, this represents a major milestone in its mission to enhance global operational readiness and reduce aircraft downtime for business aircraft operators.

"With a team of nearly 50 Crew Chiefs based on six continents—and the support, extensive capabilities, and regional know-how of our partners—Crew Chiefs will provide coverage for every business aircraft make and model, when and where needed, anywhere in the world," said Crew Chiefs CEO Mark Thibault. **C.E.**

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West Star gears up for more mx work

By Kerry Lynch

West Star Aviation is expanding workspace at its MRO facilities in Grand Junction, Colorado, and Chattanooga, Tennessee. It also continues to hire more aircraft maintenance technicians.

West Star Aviation was designated as an authorized overhaul facility for Embraer Praetor and Legacy landing gear under a strategic partnership with Héroux-Devtek. The designation covers the Legacy 450 and 500, as well as Praetor 500 and 600, and builds on West Star Aviation's capabilities as an Embraer-authorized aircraft maintenance facility.

"Adding landing gear capabilities to West Star's in-house portfolio of services will... shorten the overall turnaround time and ensure an outstanding customer experience," said Marc-Olivier Gagnon, v-p of engineering and product support for Héroux-Devtek.

West Star brings a range of capabilities to support its latest designation, including collaborative training to ensure it meets Embraer's specification and Héroux-Devtek's standards, a dedicated cadmium plating line with a chemistry lab for precise corrosion treatment, and advanced paint removal and cleaning processes, among others.

In a separate announcement, West Star highlighted its expansion plans at its Colorado and Tennessee facilities. It previously announced plans to add 40,000 sq ft of hangar space and 38,000 sq ft for office and back shop needs at its Grand Junction, Colorado site, along with additional ramp space. And in Chattanooga, Tennessee, West Star is planning for a 120,000-sq-ft expansion.

"However, what excites us even more than the physical expansion is the incredible talent we are bringing on board," the company said, noting its concerted effort to bring customer-focused team members aboard this year, as well as foster careers of existing staff.

These moves included the promotion of Steve Blume to technical sales manager for Bombardier; David Feuerhak, technical sales manager specializing in paint and interior; Lance Anderson, technical sales manager for Citation; John Driehuis, technical sales manager for Falcon; Kelley Pitts, technical sales manager for paint and interior; Nicholas Morrow, technical sales manager for paint and interior; and Mark Crotty, business development manager for Embraer.

Skyryse's SkyOS takes flight on Cirrus SR22

Flight automation specialist Skyryse has successfully flown a Cirrus SR22 piston airplane equipped with its SkyOS operating system and fly-by-wire controls, the company announced on Tuesday at NBAA-BACE 2025. The inaugural flight of the highly automated SR22 marks the first time Skyryse has demonstrated the SkyOS system on an airplane, following years of flight tests in Robinson R44 and R66 helicopters.

Skyryse's modified SR22 piston single achieved the milestone flight last week at the company's flight-test center in Camarillo, California, with senior director of flight test Miguel Mármol at the helm, a Skyryse spokeswoman told **AIN**. This week at NBAA-BACE, Skyryse is showcasing an airplane simulator to demonstrate the SkyOS capabilities.

On Monday, Skyryse announced a $112 million agreement with special missions operator Dynamic Aviation to integrate SkyOS on another airplane—the Beechcraft King Air—to provide fully autonomous, attritable UAS for the U.S. military. Dynamic Aviation has previously partnered with Merlin, another flight automation company, to convert up to 55 King Air twin turboprops.

"Technology is reshaping the battlefield, and with SkyOS integration into attritable airplanes, we can radically expand operational reach and kinetic effects in previously denied areas," said Warren Curry, v-p of sales at Skyryse. "With an aircraft-agnostic design, SkyOS provides the military with a cost-effective, mission-ready system that enhances operational flexibility—unlocking force amplification."

SkyOS flight automation system makes its fixed-wing debut on the Cirrus SR22.

Skyryse expects to obtain its first FAA supplemental type certificate next year for the modified Robinson R66, called Skyryse One. **H.W.**

AvFab's comfy seats are fit for a King (Air)

By Kerry Lynch

Aviation Fabricators (AvFab) is expecting certification shortly for two seats designed specifically for special-mission King Airs to help reduce fatigue, stabilize posture, and increase occupant stability on long flight legs, the company announced this week at NBAA-BACE 2025. A manufacturer of Textron Aviation high-density special mission seating since 2009, AvFab is rolling out the Guardian seat for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions, and the Responder seat for medevac missions.

"We found there was room for new ISR seating," said AvFab co-founder Jeff Lowe. "We were hearing from customers and our market research department found that the lead time, the cost, and the support were of considerable concern in the ISR world for seating."

He added that the company was hearing that lead times to obtain such seating could be six to nine months. "Ours is five to six weeks, and our cost is about 60% of what a comparable seat would be in the market," he said, adding that AvFab also could provide quicker turns on support.

Mission: Possible

According to AvFab v-p Hayden Lowe, the Guardian is purpose-built for ISR operators who need to maintain focus during missions that last up to 14 hours. "That requires a blend of comfort-focused features such as the ability to recline, height adjust, tracking inboard outboard, forward and aft, with the five-point harness for added safety." This seat comes with a five-point harness to provide stability.

The Responder shares many of the same features as the Guardian seat, but it is tailored to the needs of air ambulance operators, with the ability to rotate towards patients (up to 180 degrees) when actively administering care. A four- or five-point harness can come with the Responder.

Selecting Oregon Aero to provide the foam, Lowe said, "We were intent on creating a seat that not only had the features that we knew special-mission operators desired, but also the comfort. [Oregon Aero's] seat foam is known for superior comfort and durability, so they became the easy choice." AvFab teamed with Oregon Aero to sculpt the cushions to ergonomically support the seat occupants.

MARIANO ROSALES

Special-mission seats are designed for comfort.

In development for 18 months, the seats will be produced under technical standard order C39. The first two are destined for medevac operators, with delivery tentatively slated for November, pending certification. "We've got a large commitment from a major medevac operator in the UK," he said.

With the King Airs nearing market, AvFab is next looking toward the Cessna SkyCourier and Grand Caravan for development. "Both have robust special-mission capabilities, but neither appears to have a seat to match," Hayden Lowe said. Also, the company is looking at the next iteration of the King Air seat that would shave 5 to 7 pounds off the seats, he added.

TBO Extension thrusts forward for Bravo and Encore perfomance

TBO Extension, which provides FAA-certified engine life extension solutions for business aircraft, is expecting FAA authorization to expand its engine-life extension supplemental type certificate (STC) to include the Pratt & Whitney Canada (P&WC) PW530A and PW535A engines, which power the Cessna Citation Bravo and Encore, respectively.

The Atlantic Jet Partners subsidiary's STC modification for the P&WC JT15D—which powers several legacy Citations, along with the Beechjet 400A/Hawker 400XP—has been installed on more than 200 engines as a cost-effective alternative to OEM overhaul. It has added more than 2,000 hours of flight service life per engine and significantly reduced ownership costs.

Under the traditional overhaul model, operators can expect costs up to $4 million and as much as 9 months of downtime, TBO Extension noted. Under its program, the price is reduced to between $1 million and $1.5 million for both engines, including hot section inspection, and that can be accomplished in approximately six weeks.

With the STC expansion, Citation Bravo and Encore operators will now be able to extend their engine life by up to 2,500 hours through the same approach, according to the company.

"For more than a decade, we've shown JT15D operators there's a smarter FAA-certified alternative to the traditional overhaul cycle," said Jim Clifford, the company's v-p of product development. "With the new PW530/535 STC, we're extending that same proven advantage to Citation Bravo and Encore operators: lower costs, faster turnaround, and increased asset value."

For operators who commit by November 1 and place their deposit by December 1, TBO Extension is offering reduced pricing and priority installation slots ahead of the FAA STC approval, which is anticipated in early 2026. **C.E.**

General aviation is committed to CPDLC

NBAA found that general aviation, including business aircraft, now leads airlines in controller-pilot datalink communications (CPDLC) equipage.

By Amy Wilder

General aviation, including business aircraft, now leads airlines in controller-pilot datalink communications (CPDLC) equipage, according to recent FAA data highlighted by NBAA. While airlines conduct more daily flights and therefore generate more individual CPDLC transactions, NBAA noted that the data shows the business aviation community's strong commitment to equipage and participation.

"The business aviation community has stepped up to make the financial and hardware commitment to participate in CPDLC and help the FAA make the domestic CPDLC program a success," said Richard Boll, chair of NBAA's airspace and flight technologies subcommittee.

The FAA's July 23 En Route CPDLC Participation list identified 3,919 general aviation (GA) aircraft eligible to participate in U.S. Domestic En Route CPDLC. In the preceding three months, 3,689 GA aircraft used the system, compared with 3,473 airliners.

More avionics retrofit options have opened the door for smaller aircraft, including turboprops, to join the program.

The FAA's Data Communications program enables the exchange of complex air traffic control clearances through datalink, reducing reliance on voice communication. Benefits include shorter transmission times, improved National Airspace System efficiency, and enhanced safety by reducing the potential for miscommunication. FAA guidance cautions that coverage below 16,000 feet is not guaranteed, and turboprops operating at lower altitudes may experience service gaps or interruptions.

Garmin has played a key role in expanding CPDLC accessibility to a broader business and general aviation community. The company's approval of FAA Data Comm for its GTN 750Xi and GTN 725Xi panel-mount navigators—along with integration into G1000 NXi, G3000, and G5000 flight decks—means thousands of aircraft can now be updated to communicate directly with air traffic control via text-based clearances and en route messages. This advancement allows pilots with Garmin-equipped data comm to receive and accept IFR clearances digitally.

Operational threats emerge as CAE's latest hot topic for training

CAE has introduced a new data-driven training approach for business aviation pilots called Continuously Optimized Recurrent (CORe) training. The program addresses a long-standing gap in pilot instruction: emerging operational threats not typically covered in traditional task-based training.

Using data gathered through CAE Rise, which aggregates anonymized pilot performance data from thousands of simulator sessions, CORe identifies trends and patterns to develop new learning scenarios. Additional data from OEMs, operators, and sources such as EASA's Data4Safety program are also used to shape modules that reflect current and future risks.

Instead of repeating the same regulatory scenarios each year, pilots now face new, real-world scenarios that require nuanced judgment. Instructors guide pilots through these exercises, observing performance and helping refine responses to new or unseen threats.

According to CAE, the program represents an evolution beyond compliance, analyzing millions of data points to prepare pilots for unfamiliar situations. CORe training is adaptable across aircraft types and authorities, enhancing safety and efficiency throughout business aviation.

CAE has also partnered with Advanced Aircrew Academy to launch eLearning modules for business aviation, integrating online courseware into CAE's global training ecosystem. The collaboration offers courses covering programs that meet FAA and ICAO standards for operators ranging from corporate flight departments to on-demand charter services. **A.W.**

TrustFlight is unleashing the power of its AI suite with Smart Documents.

MARIANO ROSALES

Documents get Smart with TrustFlight AI suite

By Hanneke Weitering

Following its recent acquisitions of three Wheels Up subsidiaries, TrustFlight continues to expand its portfolio of aviation safety and compliance software and services while growing its workforce. In fact, the company unveiled its latest software solution, Smart Documents—which uses artificial intelligence (AI) to draft and validate compliant manuals and documents—on Tuesday at NBAA-BACE.

Smart Documents works in tandem with Smart Regulations, an AI chatbot for regulatory and compliance queries, which TrustFlight introduced in May. The two AI tools together form the foundation of TrustFlight's SmartSuite platform, which the company says will "eliminate the friction between regulatory intelligence and operational execution," thereby improving operational efficiency, safety, and compliance.

With Smart Regulations, "We basically loaded all of the global regulations into this big database...imagine like a ChatGPT interface that you can ask any question and it delves into the regulations—not just the internet," Reuben Mann, TrustFlight's senior director of marketing, told **AIN**. This search function is now integrated with Smart Documents, allowing users to reference specific regulations while drafting documents.

"There are a lot of people thinking that AI is going to replace their subject-matter-expertise jobs, but that's not necessarily the case," Mann explained. "What we're offering is a tool that allows subject matter experts to access regulations really quickly and effectively, and even interrogate specific questions or use cases in different regions. So if they want to find an answer for the FAA and EASA and find some sort of median ground that covers both regulations, and they can quickly do so, and the agent will spit out an answer."

In a demonstration of the difference between a comparison of FAA and EASA regulations for safety management systems (SMS). Kaden Oseen, AI product manager at TrustFlight, showed how the Smart Regulations agent works. "It's not a ChatGPT response in the sense that it's going to give you a quick answer and all the information that may or may not be accurate," he said. "It's going to perform research on the regulations and then come back with an answer that cites exactly which regulations were relevant to its response at each point."

After asking the agent to compare FAA and EASA SMS, within minutes it provided an overview and comparison of each regulatory framework's approach to SMS. Links are included to each set of regulations.

"We're getting quite a detailed answer here in terms of a comparison of each of the different aspects," he said. "But the key point is that everything is easily grounded and verifiable through the links that are provided in text directly to that regulation."

The user could also ask Smart Regulations to lay out the information in a table for easier comparison between FAA and EASA philosophies. But it also provides a conclusion, summarizing EASA's emphasis on organizational approach versus the FAA's separate, dedicated SMS. "That's the general conclusion it came to from the comparison," he said.

Integrating Smart Documents with TrustFlight's Centrik 5 platform brings the power of Smart Regulations to tedious research tasks. Using Smart Documents, manuals that might take months to draft from scratch can be almost entirely auto-generated, Mann explained. "You tell it what kind of document you want, and then it'll give you a big template and just write it for you," he said. "Yes, you have to go back and adjust it, but it's so much nicer to have a skeleton that tells you all the different components that should be part of a particular document."

"You can have templates for all the different types of documents that you want in aviation, and it'll give you a good starting point," he said. "If you're not sure, then Smart Regulations is embedded in Smart Documents, and you can ask it questions and it'll give you real answers from real regulations that you can put into your document."

Centrik 5 is a tool for managing cloud-based quality and safety management systems used by thousands of professionals across virtually all segments of the aviation industry, including business aviation operators and service providers, airlines, airports, aircraft manufacturers, maintenance providers, and training organizations.

At NBAA-BACE, TrustFlight is highlighting how the company has recently grown into a full safety platform, Mann told **AIN**. "We're not just an SMS provider or a QMS provider—we actually have the whole end-to-end safety solutions that all operators need."

MARIANO ROSALES

Otto Aerospace brought an engineering mockup of its Phantom 3500 business jet here to Las Vegas. The company said the aircraft will offer a midsize-jet cabin but with light jet economics.

› continued from page 1 With the exception of the Cirrus Vision Jet, composites for business jets have solely been relegated to the fuselage and empennage, but not wings.

Designing and manufacturing the necessary structure for attachment of landing gear and flight controls in a composite wing is much more difficult than with aluminum. However, the Phantom 3500's performance is greatly dependent on smooth shapes that enable laminar-flow aerodynamics, which would be impossible to achieve with a metal wing.

"We have no choice but to use composites, because the outer surface has to be made in a mold to get that precise shape required for laminar flow," Touw said. Anyway, he pointed out, military fighter jets have been flying with composite wings for decades—Dassault's Rafale being a good example.

Otto Aerospace has experience with composites as well, having test-flown a prototype experimental aircraft, the diesel Celera 500.

The Phantom 3500's composite structure will be made using a Toray 1100 process that is stronger than some conventional composite materials, according to Touw. No fasteners will mar the outside surfaces, either.

The manufacturing process is called same-qualified resin-transfer molding, which is an out-of-autoclave technique involving laying out pre-impregnated fiber into a mold and injecting resin into vacuum-bagged components and curing with heat, but not the pressure that would require an autoclave. "That gives us the precise surface we need," he said.

Also contributing to the precision required is the tooling material, which is an expensive specialty Invar metal alloy.

Once made, the airframe components are fastened together from the inside to maintain the outside smoothness. "That way we have no seams or gaps or steps or fasteners on the outside," he said.

The next step in the design phase is preliminary design review, which means the design is complete, and that is expected in January. "The next phase is to order all of the parts and then complete critical design review as a preflight situation," Touw said. "Next year, we'll assemble the aircraft. We'll fly in 2027, and it is a production-quality vehicle. We'll make four flight-test vehicles." Certification is expected in 2030.

Meanwhile, Otto Aerospace has built interiors and cockpit labs and is working on a cabin mockup it will bring to NBAA-BACE 2026.

Recent news about Flexjet's order for 300 Phantom 3500s, while surprising, underscores the support for and confidence in the program, which is well-funded, according to Touw. He anticipates spending $1.5 billion to bring the Phantom 3500 through certification and into production at the planned Jacksonville, Florida factory.

That factory will cost about $500 million, and $1 billion is earmarked for aircraft development and certification. So far, Otto Aerospace has raised about $250 million, and it will use $400 million in debt financing for the factory, along with a $515 million incentive program from the state of Florida. A Series C fundraising round is targeting $300 million, and that is expected to take place in January. Customer deposits are expected to raise some $500 million.

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