

United Airlines reveals first eVTOL passenger route starting in 2025

Enlarge / United has chosen its hometown of Chicago for the country's first commercial eVTOL route.

Archer Aviation

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In 2025, United Airlines will fly an air taxi service between the downtown Vertiport Chicago and O'Hare International Airport, using electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft it is purchasing from Archer Aviation. The Archer Midnight eVTOL aircraft will complete the route in about 10 minutes; according to local resident and Ars Managing Editor Eric Bangeman, that journey by car can take over an hour due to road construction.

"Both Archer and United are committed to decarbonizing air travel and leveraging innovative technologies to deliver on the promise of the electrification of the aviation industry," said Michael Leskinen, president of United Airlines Ventures. "Once operational, we're excited to offer our customers a more sustainable, convenient, and cost-effective mode of transportation during their commutes to the airport."

United placed an order for 200 eVTOL aircraft from Archer back in 2021 at a cost of \$1 billion. The startup has also raised

money from the automaker Stellantis, which has been helping the company with making carbon fiber composites.

United's headquarters are in Chicago, which no doubt helped determine the location of the first eVTOL route. But United and Archer also say that as the country's third-most populous city, it's a home to business and innovation that makes deploying eVTOL shuttles a good idea.

If Chicago works out, United plans to add other airport-to-city "trunk routes," with "branch" routes between different communities coming later. The Archer Midnight has a range of 100 miles (160 km) and a top speed of 150 mph (241 km/h).

If approved by the FAA, the Chicago air shuttle would be the first commercial eVTOL service to begin operating in North America. Asked about the cost, an Archer spokesperson told the Chicago Sun-Times that the company hopes to make the service competitive with Uber Black, so it will be roughly \$100 for the trip.

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