

Issue

3

WEDNESDAY  
13 October 2021

# FLIGHT

## EVENING NEWS

NBAABACE  
OCTOBER 12-14, 2021 • LAS VEGAS, NV

With distribution supported by



# Viva fast Vegas

Tickets sell out quickly as Blade helicopter shuttle speeds up static commute, and gives foretaste of urban air mobility

Pilar Wolfsteller

For the first time at the show, attendees have more than one way to get from the Las Vegas Convention Center to Henderson Executive Airport.

In addition to sitting in slow-moving traffic on the ground, they can now soar over the city's iconic Strip in an Airbus Helicopters H135 powered by Blade.

The urban air mobility service provider has partnered with local aerial tour company Maverick

Helicopters to set up a pop-up shuttle service, including chic lounges on either end of the journey, giving passengers a taste of what urban air mobility networks of the future could look like.

And, as was to be expected at an aviation show, the response was overwhelming.

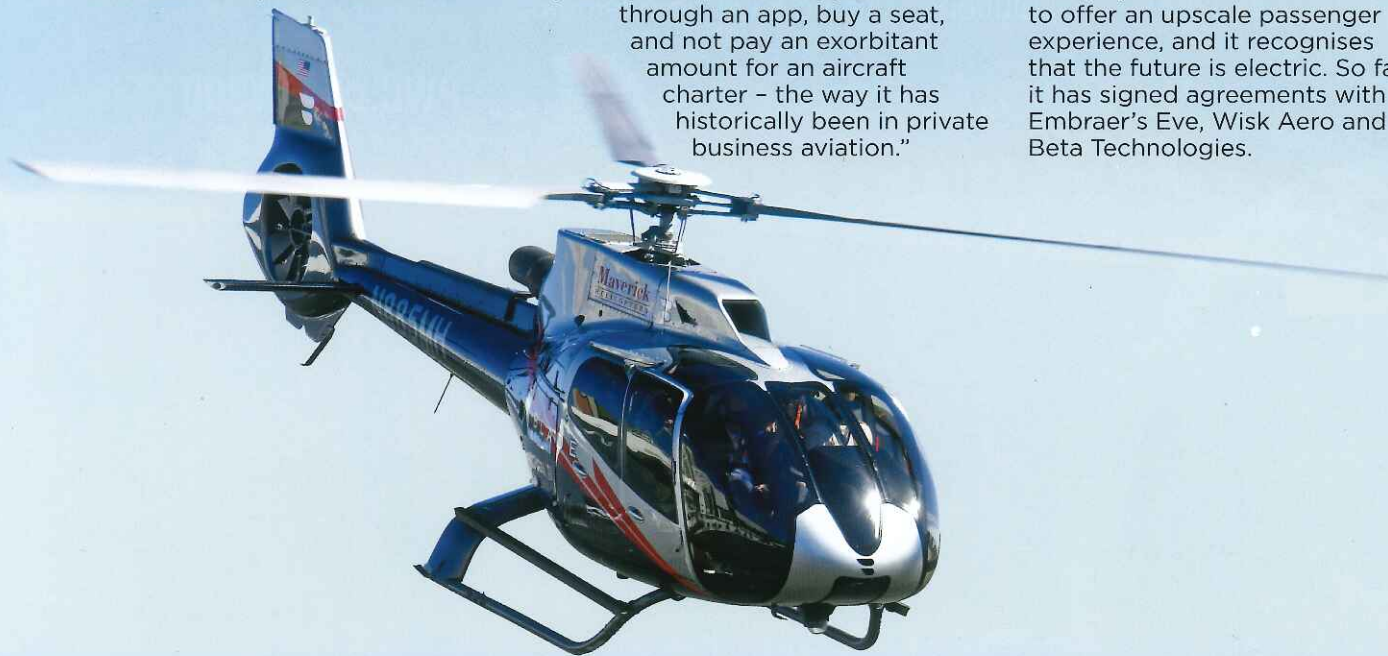
"The flights sold out in minutes," says Blade president Melissa Tomkiel. "It's a shame because we would have liked for everyone who wanted to experience it to get that chance."

"We want to show people that you can access air transportation through an app, buy a seat, and not pay an exorbitant amount for an aircraft charter - the way it has historically been in private business aviation."

By the end of Thursday, the company will have offered 24 flights between the two venues for six passengers each. The cost of a leg: \$99 per person.

The 11-minute flight is conducted at about 300-500ft above the ground. That's high enough to see the city's sights, but lower than the tops of some of the city's world-famous towering casino-hotels.

Blade, which recently became publicly traded through a merger with investment company Experience Investment, works with aircraft providers across the country to offer an upscale passenger experience, and it recognises that the future is electric. So far, it has signed agreements with Embraer's Eve, Wisk Aero and Beta Technologies.



## Data'll do nicely for Wheels Up

Fresh off its initial public offering, fast-growing Wheels Up has arrived at NBAA with a Silicon Valley-inspired plan to use technology that makes it easier for a customer to plan travel, and in turn uses that customer data to improve its services.

New president Vinayak Hegde, a veteran of Amazon, Groupon and Airbnb, says that the key is to make the process easy and fast. Just like booking an Uber online, booking a plane should not be rocket science.

"How do you create the perfect trip? The key is to make it instant-bookable, with as few clicks as possible," Hegde says.

"The customer wants the information and they want to make the decision now."

But the company is also very aware of the value of that data.

"Not all customers are created equal," he says.

"With the data, we can predict [a customer's] lifetime value, and we have the ability to personalise their experience like never before."

"We are only starting to do that now."



Vinayak Hegde: "The key is to make the process easy and fast"

BOOTH  
544



— THE —  
**MOD**  
THAT TURNS HEADS

  
**Aviation Partners®**



## Plenty in the tank

Walk the show floor and you'll see three massive aircraft refuelling trucks – all owned by SkyMark Refuelers.

SkyMark has an interesting business: it purchases diesel trucks and modifies them into refuelling lorries for sale to aircraft fuel providers.

Scattered around the show floor are two of SkyMark's 18,930-litre (5,000USgal) refuellers and one massive 26,500-litre beast, says Jose Molina, executive vice-president of sales.



Molina: bringing the big beasts to the show



Michimasa Fujino: "This is the first transcontinental light jet"

## HondaJet concept lights up the show

Japanese manufacturer reveals mock-up aimed at taking on midsize market rivals

Jon Hemmerdinger

The business aviation community is coming to terms today with a new contender in the crowded light jet segment, after yesterday's surprise reveal of Honda Aircraft's HondaJet 2600 concept.

Unlike Honda's existing HA-420, the HondaJet 2600 – unveiled as a mock-up at the show – will have sufficient range and size to compete in the midsize market.

"This aircraft is the first transcontinental light jet. It is capable of flying from New York to Los Angeles," says Honda Aircraft chief executive Michimasa Fujino.

The clean-sheet concept's range, efficiency, comfort and lower cabin-pressure altitude will "redefine" the light jet segment, he says.

The aircraft will carry up to 11 people and be capable of being flown by a single pilot. It will have 2,625nm (4,862km) of range with five people, maximum cruise speed of 450kt (834km/h) and a maximum cruise altitude of 47,000ft.

Honda Aircraft has not officially launched the 2600 development programme nor specified a development timeline. Rather, it has revealed a concept it hopes will generate sufficient customer interest to move the project forward.

"We are still looking for customer feedback and market feedback before we commit to dates," says Honda Aircraft director of sales Peter Krieger.

The jet will have upper-wing mounted engines, like the HA-420 HondaJet Elite S. That jet, conceived in the early 2000s, can carry up to eight people (including a pilot) and has 1,437nm of range.

The 2600 will have a composite fuselage, and a new wing with a 17.3m (56.7ft) span. The cabin will be several inches wider at shoulder and foot level than the HA-420, and the centre of its cabin will be slightly higher, Krieger says. The cockpit will also be larger than the HA-420.

Krieger says the 2600 will be 20% more fuel-efficient than other light jets on the market, thanks to its upper-wing-mounted engine configuration and clean-sheet design that maximises "laminar flow" – a state at which air flows around an aircraft without disturbance.

## View from the inside

Need to see under the skin of an aircraft? Look no farther than booth 1223.

There, you will find USA Borescopes, a Tennessee company that manufactures borescopes used to inspect hard-to-see places inside aircraft and their engines.

"You can go into any kind of cavity and look around," says USA Borescopes sales representative Micah Armato. "They [help] inspect turbines... Look for cracks."

The system uses a fibre-optic probe that ends with a "four-way articulating camera" and an LED light, Armato says.

The probe can be manipulated by a remote control, and video is displayed on a high-definition monitor.

The systems cost between \$5,000 and \$12,000.



Micah Armato: he sees everything

## Blade to last

Hartzell Propeller is at the show promoting its five-blade composite propellers – products the company says are lighter and have better performance than traditional props.

Hartzell's composite five-blade props produce more thrust than metal four-blade models. That translates into 2-5kt (4-9km) more speed, shorter take-off rolls and climb rates that are 100-150ft more per minute, says the Ohio company's president, JJ Frigge.

Five-blade props also have "ramp appeal... It looks sexy", Frigge says. The company makes custom props for aircraft including Daher TBMs, Beechcraft King Air 200s

and 350s, Pilatus PC-12s and CASA 212s.

"What we are seeing is a huge demand... in the direction of composite," Frigge says. "We are working on a handful of other programmes right now that we expect to bring to market."

He describes the process of manufacturing composite props as "very manual", noting that Hartzell uses a resin-transfer process. The company's composite props have foam cores, and the design allows for wider chords and thinner aerofoils. "That equals... less drag," Frigge says.

Hartzell's composite five-blade props can cost 20-30% more than traditional props. "You get that back," says Frigge. "These are certified for unlimited life."



Looking good... JJ Frigge shows off the five-blade prop

## CAE partners on Phenom 300 sim

Embraer kicked off the second day of the show by announcing it has partnered with Canadian flight training company CAE to offer a full flight simulator for the airframer's Phenom 300E light jet.

Embraer-CAE Training Services, a joint training entity between the two companies, will operate the simulator, though the partners have not said where they intend to locate the machine.

There are now six Phenom-family simulators at three training centres: those in Dallas, Guarulhos in Brazil and Burgess Hill near London.