

## United Airlines to launch flying taxis by 2025

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United Airlines is teaming up with Archer Aviation to provide air taxi service between O'Hare International Airport and the West Loop starting in 2025, at the same time construction on the Kennedy Expressway will be causing major delays for outbound traffic.

United and Archer plan to launch the city's first air taxi route between O'Hare and Vertiport Chicago on the Near West Side close to Pilsen and the Illinois Medical District, offering 10-minute rides between the airport and the downtown area.

The same trip can take an hour or more during the morning and afternoon rush, even before the recent start of a three-year repaving project will create even more backups on the Kennedy through the end of 2025.

"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," United Airlines Ventures president Michael Leskinen said in a statement. "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."

The taxi service will use Archer's new Midnight brand of electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft, capable of carrying four passengers and a pilot. Archer is working with the FAA to have Midnight aircraft certified by late 2024.

United and Archer already have teamed up for a similar air taxi service between the Downtown Manhattan Heliport and Newark Liberty International Airport in 2025.

"We're thrilled to add Chicago to our growing list of initial launch cities as we continue to solidify our UAM [urban air mobility] network plans," Archer founder and CEO Adam Goldstein said in a press release. "We're looking forward to working with state and city leaders to bring an innovative transportation solution to the City of Chicago and its surrounding communities."

ComEd also will work with United and Archer to set up the infrastructure needed to power the eVTOLs.

The two-year lag until 2025 before the planned start of service in both Chicago and New York is because the electric aircraft does not yet have approval to fly.

"Legally, we're working with the FAA in a hand-in-hand coordination with them to try to get this certified," said Bryan Bernhard of Archer aviation.

So how much does this cost? Archer wouldn't answer specifically, but compared it to what an Uber Black might be.

In rush hour from the Vertiport Chicago site at 14th and Wood streets, a trip to O'Hare on Uber Black is about \$140 one way.

Where the air taxis would land at O'Hare has not been answered. But an air taxi service has been floated here before.

Eve Air Mobility began testing the concept of air taxis in Chicago in September, offering trips between helipads in Chicago to Schaumburg and Tinley Park. Eve Air Mobility also has a partnership with United and is awaiting federal approval.

While pricing, again, has yet to be announced for air taxi services in Chicago, Eve's test concept carried a \$150 price tag.

"What the game plan for the future is that this will end up being like an UberX ride in the next couple of years, where it will be, you know, \$50 to \$75 to take a ride down there," Tinley Park Village Manager Pat Carr said in September.

Since EVTOLs aren't yet regulated to fly, helicopters were used for the three-week simulation.

United has invested \$15 million in EVE Air for up to 400 of their eVTOLs.

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