



4IR Technologies:
AI, IoT, Cloud computing

Emirate:
Dubai

Maturity:
■ ■ ■ ■ □
Pilot Deployment

Type:
Public-Private

SMART CITIES

032

Electric Air Taxis and Urban Vertiport Network (Dubai)

ACTORS

Joby Aviation
RTA Dubai
Skyports

SNAPSHOT

Dubai is building an integrated electric air taxi service, combining piloted electric aircraft that take off and land vertically with dedicated vertiports, digital fleet management and a new aviation regulatory pathway. In November 2025, Joby Aviation completed the UAE's first point-to-point electric air taxi flight, with a commercial passenger service targeted for 2026.¹ The initial network covers four locations: Dubai International Airport, Dubai Mall, Atlantis The Royal, and the American University in Dubai. The vertiport near Dubai International Airport, which Skyports describes as the world's first commercial facility of its kind, reached technical completion in April 2026.^{2,3}

WHY IT MATTERS

Urban mobility is reaching a physical limit in many global cities. Roads can be expanded only so far, metro systems require long capital cycles, and surface congestion imposes persistent costs in time, productivity, and emissions: in the most congested cities, drivers now lose more than 100 hours a year to traffic.⁴ Dubai's aerial taxi programme addresses that constraint by adding a new transport layer above the city rather than extending mobility only along the ground.

The 4IR significance lies not in the aircraft itself, but in the system being built around it. Dubai is testing how electric propulsion can be integrated with digital fleet management, charging infrastructure, vertiports, real-time airspace coordination, passenger handling and aviation regulation to create a functioning urban air mobility network. While dozens of electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) companies worldwide are developing aircraft,⁵ Dubai is focused on building the operating environment required to deploy them at scale. This model is anchored in a 6-year agreement granting Joby the exclusive right to operate air taxis in the emirate, alongside coordination among the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA), Joby, Skyports, and the General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) on infrastructure, transport integration, and certification.⁶ For a city that already aims, under its Self-Driving Transport Strategy, for 25% of all journeys to be autonomous by 2030, aerial mobility adds a new dimension to that ambition.⁷

HOW THE TECHNOLOGY WORKS

Joby Aviation manufactures the aircraft: an all-electric, five-seat vehicle that lifts off vertically using distributed electric propulsion, transitions into wing-borne flight, and lands at dedicated vertiports without a runway. It carries one pilot and four passengers at speeds up to 321 kilometres per hour, with a range of up to 161 kilometres.⁸ The aircraft is piloted, not autonomous, and commercial operations remain subject to UAE regulatory certification, including an Air Operator Certificate issued by the General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA).⁹

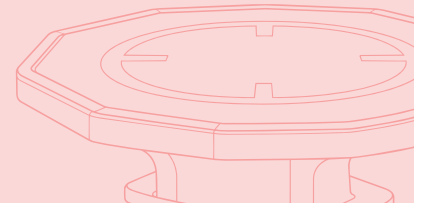
Skyports is building the ground infrastructure. The vertiport near Dubai International Airport has two take-off and landing stands, charging systems, passenger processing, and ground transport connections.¹⁰ Joby's ElevateOS software platform coordinates scheduling, passenger flow, pilot operations, and fleet management across the network, functioning as the digital operating system that connects aircraft, vertiports, and passengers.¹¹

**17
MINUTES**

flight time from Margham to Al
Maktoum Airport, vs ~50 min by car

**4
LOCATIONS**

in the initial Dubai network



IMPACT AND RESULTS

The project is pre-commercial, so impact is best measured through deployment milestones. In November 2025, Joby completed the UAE's first piloted point-to-point electric air taxi flight, flying from Margham to Al Maktoum International Airport in 17 minutes.¹² The flight connected Margham, a desert test site on the Dubai–Al Ain Road, with Al Maktoum International Airport in Dubai South. The same journey would take around 50 minutes by car.¹³ In April 2026, the vertiport that Skyports describes as the world's first commercial facility of its kind reached technical completion near Dubai International Airport.¹⁴

The expected passenger benefit is shorter journey times on routes where road travel is slow. RTA has stated that a trip from Dubai International Airport to Palm Jumeirah could take approximately 10 minutes by aerial taxi, compared with around 45 minutes by car.¹⁵ The wider impact is institutional: Dubai is building not only an aircraft service but the infrastructure, operating model, and regulatory pathway for advanced air mobility at city scale.



WHAT'S NEXT

Joby's UAE Air Operator Certificate process and aircraft approvals remain the critical gates before a paid passenger service can begin. The UAE aviation regulator has reportedly set a target of completing air taxi certification by the third quarter of 2026, making the second half of 2026 decisive for launch readiness.¹⁶

The opportunity extends beyond one route or one aircraft. If certification, vertiport infrastructure, trained personnel, digital systems, and airspace governance mature together, Dubai could set the operating template for advanced air mobility globally: electric, digitally coordinated, regulator-enabled, and embedded into a city's public transport system.

"By working alongside the RTA, other government agencies and infrastructure partners, we've been able to streamline development of the world's first air taxi service and are closer than ever to making urban air transport an everyday reality for residents and visitors across the UAE," said Joe Ben Bevirt, founder and CEO of Joby Aviation.¹⁷

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