NEOM AND VOLOCOPTER: FIRST ELECTRIC AIR TAXI FLIGHT IN SAUDI ARABIA

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NEOM and Volocopter announced the successful completion of a series of air taxi test flights. This marks the first time an eVTOL aircraft has received a special flight authorization and performed test flights in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The flight test campaign lasted over a week and built on 18 months of collaboration between NEOM, the General Authority of Civil Aviation and Volocopter, with the aim of implementing and scaling an electric UAM ecosystem and testbed in NEOM. The parties worked closely to ensure full regulatory compliance and safety ahead of the test campaign.

Nadhmi Al-Nasr,CEO of NEOM, commented: “The successful test flight of a Volocopter eVTOL is not just another milestone on the journey towards the creation of NEOM’s innovative, sustainable, multimodal transportation system – it is a tangible example of NEOM as a global accelerator and incubator of solutions to the world’s most pressing challenges. Driving the development of smart, sustainable, and safe mobility systems will improve livability and connectivity in cities around the world and reduce carbon emissions, creating a cleaner future for all.”

His Excellency, Abdulaziz A. Al-Duailej, President of the General Authority of Civil Aviation

(GACA) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, said: “This safe and successful test flight represents an important milestone of the Saudi aviation sector and another steady step towards achieving the aviation sector’s strategy, through innovation and employing emerging technologies to create new industries that contribute to the output GDP and create more jobs. It also confirms GACA’s commitment to enabling the safe integration of innovative air transport patterns that improve the mobility experience of individuals in urban areas and the quality of life in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.”

NEOM and Volocopter share a joint vision of creating a better future through innovative, clean technology. As part of a multimodal transportation system, electric air mobility reflects NEOM’s ambition to revolutionize mobility and transform people’s lives. In 2021, NEOM and Volocopter founded a joint venture to scale advanced air mobility, positioning NEOM as a collaborative, global living lab for the future of transportation.

Christian Bauer, Chief Commercial Officer and Chief Financial Officer of Volocopter, stated: “It is beyond exciting to see our work from the past 18 months come to fruition. As the first eVTOL aircraft to ever test in Saudi Arabia, we are proud to have lain the groundwork for our future collaboration here in NEOM. ”

The test campaign focused on the flight performance of the Volocopter aircraft in local climate and environmental conditions, as well as testing its integration into the local unmanned aircraft system traffic management (UTM) system.

Volocopter eVTOLs will be key to NEOM's smart and sustainable multimodal mobility system, which will be powered by 100% renewable energy generated by solar and wind energy sources. They will be used in a variety of roles, including as air taxis and emergency response vehicles, and are quieter, more easily adaptable, and cheaper to operate than the helicopters often employed today. They have a smaller on-ground infrastructure footprint, fewer operating restrictions, and employ smart and autonomous capabilities that ensure both safety and sustained relevance in future contexts.

The test flight announcement builds on NEOM's EUR 175 million investment and joint venture with Volocopter and positions NEOM as a leader in future mobility solutions. Volocopter expects to obtain type certification for its VoloCity air taxi in 2024, enabling future commercial operations. Volocopter recently announced the commencement of VoloCity serial production at its facilities in Bruchsal, Germany, with a capacity to deliver more than 50 aircraft a year.

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