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# House passes Rep. Rick Larsen-backed bill to support emerging aviation tech

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The U.S. House last week passed a bill sponsored by Rep. Rick Larsen, D-Everett, that would invest millions of dollars in infrastructure projects for emerging aviation technologies known as advanced air mobility.

The bill, called the Advanced Aviation Infrastructure Modernization Act, would help state and local governments begin building or repurposing aviation infrastructure needed for the commercialization of technologies like air taxis and drone delivery, which have seen a surge in startup activity in recent years. That has included startups like Tacoma-based Zeva Aero, which is developing a saucer-shaped aircraft, and major investments such as The Boeing Co.'s



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Tacoma-based Zeva completed the first untethered flight of its saucer-shaped, single-person aircraft Jan. 13, a milestone in what could be a growth sector for the aerospace industry. A bill sponsored by Rep. Rick Larsen would create a \$25 million pilot program to develop public or private “vertiports” and other infrastructure to support advanced air mobility technologies.

more than \$450 million investment in California-based Wisk Aero, which is developing a two-person electric passenger aircraft.

The bill passed by a vote of 338 to 73 and has been sent to the Senate for review by the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

The bill creates a \$25 million pilot program that would provide grants to develop public or private "vertiports" for takeoff and landing or technologies like ground sensors, electric charging infrastructure or wireless networks to support the new operations.

The new technologies will compete for a slice of the airspace currently in use by more traditional passenger, cargo and recreational aviation activities, Larsen said. That includes a flourishing space launch industry as well as advanced air mobility operations that largely rely on emerging electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, or eVTOLs.

"U.S. aviation is going through some pretty fundamental shifts where new entrants aren't airplanes as we've traditionally thought of them," he said.

The Aerospace Industries Association estimated the potential market for advanced air mobility at \$115 billion annually by 2035.

"Bills like these are prime examples of the public-private partnership necessary to advance U.S. leadership in emerging technologies, create hundreds of thousands of jobs, and ultimately transform the transport of people and goods across the country," said Eric Fanning, who heads the association, in a news release.

A second bill passed by both the Senate and the House establishes an interagency working group within the Department of Transportation to coordinate development of the air transportation systems.

The bill does not address or provide resources for certification of the new technologies, which has been a looming priority for the Federal Aviation Administration as it seeks to ensure both the safety of the aircraft themselves and their air traffic management systems.

The bill could provide resources for regional airports like Arlington Municipal Airport or Snohomish County's Paine Field, Larsen added. In its land-use forecast for its 20-year master plan, Paine Field identified parcels that could be earmarked for advanced air mobility uses.

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