

SpaceX to build rocket launch site in Texas

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The SpaceX Dragon cargo craft is pictured just prior to being released by the International Space Station's Canadarm2 robotic arm on May 31 to allow it to head toward a splashdown in the Pacific Ocean. Credit: NASA

SpaceX will build the world's first commercial site for orbital rocket launches in the southernmost tip of Texas.

The state of Texas added \$15.3 million in incentives to the geographic value of a location east of Brownsville that will allow SpaceX to have greater control over the timing of its launches. The company has said it

plans to launch 12 rockets a year from the Boca Chica Beach, a short walk from the Gulf of Mexico and just a couple miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border.

"Texas has been on the forefront of our nation's [space exploration](#) efforts for decades, so it is fitting that SpaceX has chosen our state as they expand the frontiers of commercial space flight," Gov. Rick Perry's office said Monday in a prepared statement.

SpaceX plans to make an \$85 million investment and create 300 jobs. The company already has a rocket testing facility in McGregor that employs 250 people.

Space Exploration Technologies CEO Elon Musk, said, "In addition to creating hundreds of high-tech jobs for the Texas workforce, this site will inspire students, expand the supplier base and attract tourists to the South Texas area."

One of the site's biggest hurdles seemed to be its environmental impact. The site is bordered on three sides by state park land that's managed by the federal government as part of the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge. But in late May, the Federal Aviation Administration released a final environmental review that found the project was unlikely to jeopardize the existence of protected animal species and would create few unavoidable impacts.

SpaceX's Dragon cargo ship already ferries supplies and experiments to and from the International Space Station for NASA.

In April, NASA agreed to lease launch pad 39A at Cape Canaveral to SpaceX. The company also launches from Vandenberg Air Force base in California.

SpaceX has proposed launching its Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy—under development—rockets from Boca Chica.

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