

# Electric jet startup could become 'Uber in the sky'

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Eviation Aircraft co-founder and chief executive Omer Bar-Yohay speaks of a future in which people could take Uber to a regional airport, then summon an electric plane with an app to whisk them inexpensively to destinations hundreds of miles away

Eviation Aircraft chief executive Omer Bar-Yohay pictures a day not too far away when summoning a bargain plane ride with a smartphone will be as easy as hailing Uber.

The Israel-based startup working on a self-piloting, electric [aircraft](#) was at the WSJD Live conference here Tuesday with a vision of "Uber meeting Tesla in the sky."

Bar-Yohay spoke of a future in which people could take Uber to a regional airport, then use another [smartphone application](#) to summon an Eviation electric plane to whisk them inexpensively to destinations hundreds of miles away.

"What would happen if Uber meets Tesla in the sky?" Bar-Yohay asked rhetorically in an interview.

"I think it makes super-commuting not so super anymore; you just go. That is the vision."

Eviation was at the Paris Air Show earlier this year with a small-scale prototype, and is intent on returning with a full-scale electric aircraft capable of carrying passengers in 2019.

## **Funding takeoff**

Co-founders were at the Wall Street Journal technology conference to rustle up funding, with a goal of about \$20 million.

The startup founded about two years ago has been paying its way out of pocket, with some help from the Israeli government, going through about \$10 million to date, according to Bar-Yohay.

The new infusion of cash will be used as fuel in a race to be first to market with an electric airplane, this one designed to carry up to nine passengers and two crew members.

"We have been sprinting full-speed for the past two years," Bar-Yohay

said.

"I don't think it is going to be winner takes all, but it will be winner takes a hell of a lot."

In his eyes, the appeal was obvious.

Instead of spending hours in a car traveling hundreds of miles, an electric plane summoned on-demand to a regional airport would get passengers to far-away destinations quickly and inexpensively.

Eviation is out to take advantage of small, typically underutilized regional airports, making them lift-off spots for on-demand flights.

"It needs to cost like a bus ticket," Bar-Yohay said of such a service.

"If you build the plane electric, like a Tesla, the cost of operating becomes ridiculously low."

## **'Never break'**

Electric components for airplanes are a fraction of the cost of comparable parts for engines in traditional aircraft, and are more reliable, according to Bar-Yohay.

"You need to build machines that will never break; electric components are naturally like this," Bar-Yohay said.

Eviation plane batteries are spread out in more than a dozen places, so "no matter what hits you, some part of the aircraft will have the power to keep you going," according to Bar-Yohay.

The expected range of the Eviation plane will be about 650 miles (1,050

kilometers).

The vision is to have the aircraft be self-piloting, so it could be summoned by an app or be available as desired for people who pool resources to buy one.

"The market can become transportation for the masses," Bar-Yohay said.

"We are already getting used to not owning everything."

He notes that while society may be grappling with trusting self-driving cars, self-piloting aircraft have been around for decades.

"We are not here to steal clients from Cessna or other aircraft makers," Bar-Yohay said.

"We are here to steal clients from Ford, GM, Tesla... because we can be cheaper per mile."

He expected the first-generation Eviation aircraft to cost \$2.5 million to \$3 million.

Bar-Yohay noted there is competition forming already, including rideshare leader Uber researching vertical-takeoff vehicles to fly passengers short distances.

"It's the next blue ocean out there," Bar-Yohay said of the on-demand flight market.

"There is going to be room for everybody."

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