

Going up? Kickstarter hopefuls raise space elevator cash

27 August 2012, by Nancy Owano



(Phys.org)—A Space Elevator Project has gone past its \$8,000 goal on Kickstarter, although the group's ultimate goal is to raise a cooler \$100,000 up to \$3 million as the project achieves phase to phase progress. The company, LiftPort, has the idea for a space elevator that could take robots, cargo, and humans to the surface of the moon with a single launch rocket solution. The concept could become a reality in eight years. Michael Laine, CEO of the company, set as its first goal the draw of \$8,000 to fund the early part of the project that will be placed on the moon, hopefully around the year 2020. Laine has been immersed in space elevator research for over ten years and is the president of the US Alumni Association for the

International Space University.

While a small amount of money raised will make them a stronger hobby team the more they raise in time the stronger the possibility that LiftPort can become a true lunar elevator company. As of this writing, the amount that has been pledged is \$13,899 with 16 days to go

The overall goal is continued research and work toward the construction of that lunar elevator. "The study will include characterization of materials; analysis of required rocketry and robotics; and evaluation of landing sites and methods of anchoring to the [Lunar surface](#). Additionally, Ribbon spooling, infrastructure deployment, and [micrometeorite](#) mitigation techniques will be explored," according to the company.

The Liftport system would allow access to the lunar surface via a ribbon cable. The Liftport system would first send a base [spacecraft](#) into orbit. A ribbon cable would shoot out towards the lunar surface, and a lander module would attach to the moon's surface. The [lander](#) would be drilled into the surface.

The immediate step first is to test the system on earth with a 2km-high elevator. The company plans to use the [Kickstarter](#) funds to create a floating balloon platform tethered to the ground, which will assist a robot to climb into the sky. According to company notes, "the plan is to first build the 'bot, then an indoor test rig. Imagine a vertical treadmill."

When the team is satisfied with its performance, they will build out the Tethered Towers test platform of helium balloons held to the ground with a ribbon. "We can pre-test this up to 200ft without causing a ruckus at the Federal Aviation Administration. Any further, and we need airspace clearances from the FAA, Air Force and Navy."

Laine says that the modest goal of \$8,000 at first is

to rebuild their community. "We will [launch](#) another campaign; and another, and another and another."

The most ambitious goal of raising \$3 million would allow the LiftPort to carry out a one-year feasibility study for the moon [space elevator](#) project.

If successful, the technology could also act as a cheap communications tower on Earth, help to monitor crops, watch for forest fires, and carry cameras to show a sky picture of natural disaster areas.

"We've been catalyzing and coordinating the commercial development of the Space Elevator for over nine years. I was personally involved with NASA's 2001-2003 definitive research study. My company, LiftPort, grew out of the results of that study," said Laine.

More information: liftport.com/
www.kickstarter.com/projects/m...o-the-sky-a-tethered

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