

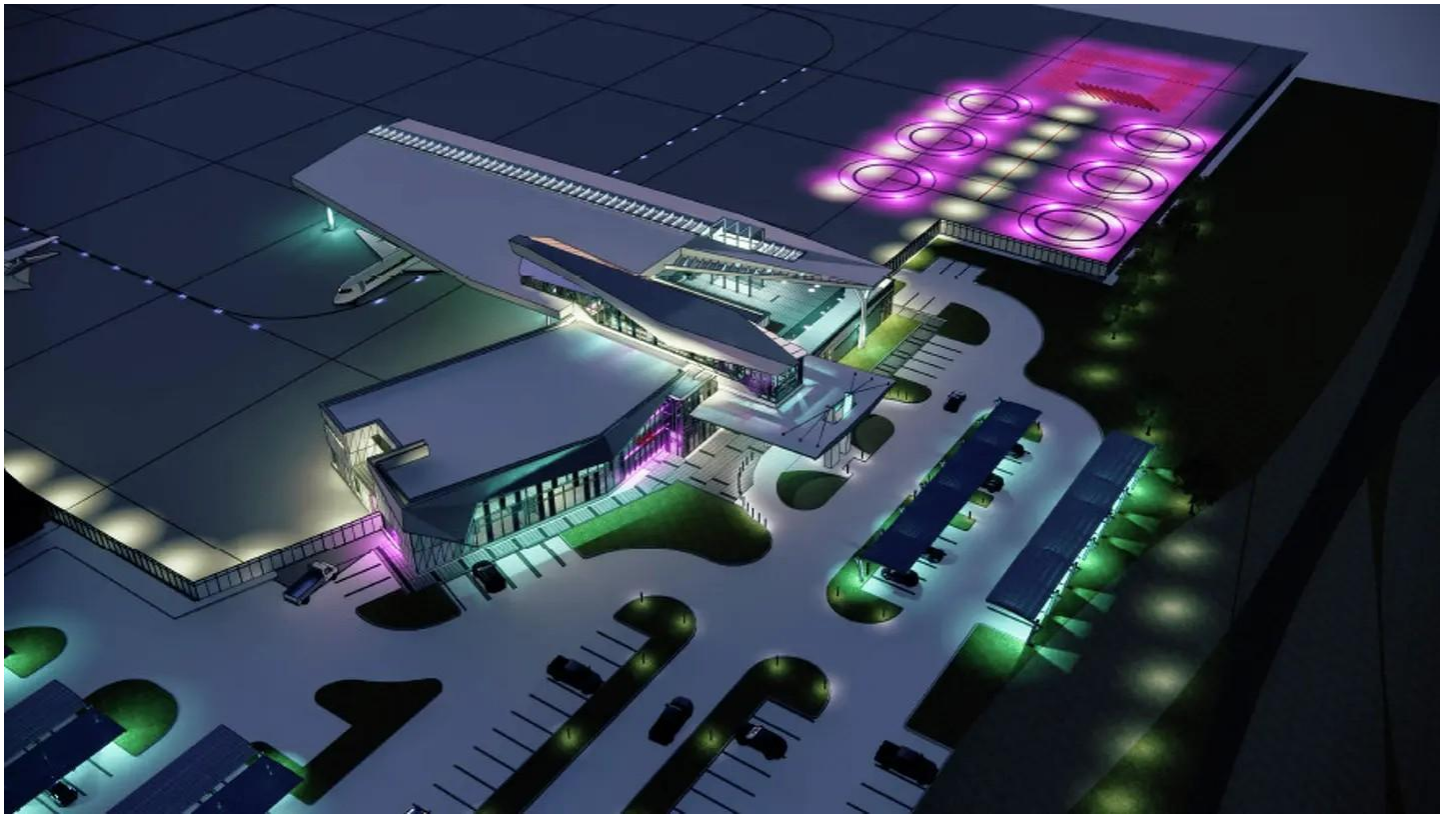
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Electric flying cars? South Texas' first vertiport gaining steam in San Antonio

Port San Antonio and Boeing's Austin-based SkyGrid will collaborate on developing the infrastructure needed for self-flying aircraft.

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Brandon Lingle – February 10, 2026



A rendering depicts a vision of a vertiport that's part of Port San Antonio's concept for the Defense Industrial Research Campus of the Future. Image credit: Port San Antonio

Port San Antonio's vision to create an air taxi hub of the future is gaining momentum with the help of a Boeing company based in Austin.

The tech campus has partnered with SkyGrid LLC, a subsidiary of Boeing Co.'s Wisk Aero, on development of the region's first vertiport for electric flying cars.

"Understanding the airspace and being able to map the airspace becomes vitally important" with self-flying aircraft, said Jim Perschbach, the port's president and CEO. "None of this works unless you can safely operate."



SkyGrid CEO Jia Xu and Jim Perschbach, president and CEO of Port San Antonio, meet at the future location of San Antonio's first vertiport earlier this month. The South Side tech campus is partnering with SkyGrid on the development of the hub for electric flying cars. Image credit: Andrew J. Whitaker/San Antonio Express-News

The futuristic craft that take off and land vertically and resemble giant drones will be zipping across Texas skies with people and cargo within the decade, he says. And SkyGrid, as “one of the world’s leaders” in the business, will play a big role in making sure the infrastructure is in place to safely manage that traffic and that the port can play a role in developing the industry.

The port has invested nearly \$42 million — a combination of port money and grants from the Texas Department of Transportation and Federal Aviation Administration — for airfield and airport upgrades, including the vertiport site about a block from the campus’ headquarters. It’s also commissioned a study to develop several routes across San Antonio.

While Wisk and other manufacturers are developing the next generation of aircraft known as “advanced air mobility,” SkyGrid is focused on infrastructure.

Understanding the airspace

It’s developing software and hardware “to create a very high-fidelity digital rendition of the operating environment,” SkyGrid CEO Jia Xu said during a recent visit to the future vertiport. Without pilots on board, “you have to rely on higher integrity information, data and sensor feeds to ensure that your operation is safe.”

The idea is to pull data from various sensors, including radars and aircraft transponders, to provide accurate views of the airspace.

“SkyGrid is really one of the world’s leaders in ... truly understanding what we know and what we don’t know about the signals and the weather in the airspace, developing the technologies and integrating the high-powered computing and the artificial intelligence and everything else to break that down,” Perschbach said.

The future vertiport will connect to Kelly Field, and both Perschbach and Xu see the airfield’s mix of civil, commercial and military aircraft as a unique testing ground for the technologies. Xu said if they’re successful in the complex environment around the port, they “can operate anywhere.”

“We both want to know the structure of the airspace as well as the traffic going through it,” Xu said. “Once you have that data, that’s where the smarts of the SkyGrid system can try to understand ... how do we want to control the traffic locally with more automation.”

Identifying the hurdles

The three-year memorandum of understanding outlining the partnership is the first of its type for both entities. They’ll work together to “identify the main technology and regulatory hurdles and gaps preventing the scaled operations for crewed and uncrewed aircraft systems and propose solutions and realistic roadmaps to overcome these,” the agreement said.

The work at the port could include setting up a test site for SkyGrid, reviewing plans, drafting a paper on cybersecurity needs at joint-use airfields for the Defense Department and other federal agencies, developing digital flight rules, designing routes, managing unmanned aircraft in the airspace, integrating technologies with air traffic control,



Perschbach points into the distance at the location of the future vertiport location. Perschbach says SkyGrid, as “one of the world’s leaders” in the business, will play a big role in making sure the infrastructure is in place to safely manage electric vertical takeoff and landing vehicles and that the port can play a role in developing the industry. Image credit: Andrew J. Whitaker/San Antonio Express-News

assessing cyber resiliency technologies, certifying ground systems and looking at regulatory frameworks and safety cases.

The partnership could lead to more work as the Trump administration looks to speed up the rollout of such technologies. That could include responding to FAA announcements as well as task orders from the Center for Advanced Aviation Technologies. U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas led the effort to create that research center that's led out of Texas A&M-Corpus Christi and headquartered at Texas A&M-Fort Worth.

“Sen. Cruz is really pushing for this kind of advanced aviation work to happen in Texas,” Xu said.

The vertiport

Formerly home to old warehouses, the port's future terminal and vertiport complex is now a 120-acre expanse of graded dirt. CPS Energy crews currently are burying the power lines that run along the perimeter as the port seeks to clear out obstacles for future flight operations.

Extensions of the taxiway and an access road are expected to be done by the end of the year, but the actual designs of the vertiport aren't finalized. The work with SkyGrid will help guide design decisions.



Perschbach, left, meets with Xu at the future location of San Antonio's vertiport, which will connect to Kelly Field. Both Perschbach and Xu see the airfield's mix of civil, commercial and military aircraft as a unique testing ground for the technologies. Image credit: Andrew J. Whitaker/San Antonio Express-News



Power lines are being removed and placed underground as the port works to clear out any obstacles for the next generation of aircraft that will be flying in and out of the future vertiport. Image credit: Andrew J. Whitaker/San Antonio Express-News

Exactly, when electric vertical takeoff and landing vehicles, known as eVTOLs, or other types of hybrid aircraft will start flying around Kelly remains up in the air.

“Hopefully, we're going to see them relatively soon,” Perschbach said, but the challenge is “a lot of the flashier looking, sexier aircraft are still awaiting certification” by the FAA.

He said more conventional looking hybrid-electric airplanes likely will be the first to begin testing at Kelly.

“What makes San Antonio so enticing, and obviously I'm biased, is we can provide an urban environment, a suburban environment and a rural environment within five minutes of each other,” he said.