

A new breed of smaller, cheaper jets is poised to change the face of aviation. They're called very light jets, or VLJs. Weighing less than 10,000 pounds, they can use runways as short as 3,000 feet—and they cost a fraction of the traditional private jet.

A revolution in the making? Some industry insiders tout VLJs, with their affordability and point-to-point convenience, as the next great boom for the industry. Others call the VLJ phenomenon a potential “dot-com with wings.” Whatever the prognosis, there's no shortage of manufacturers lining up to lighten up. Companies such as Cessna and Eclipse Aviation have order backlogs in the thousands.

With the future for VLJs still very much in the balance, we asked our three experts to weigh in and tell us:

# Will very light jets (VLJs) change the way we fly?



**Peg Billson ('84, PC)**  
Chief Operating Officer, Eclipse Aviation

→ **VLJs are** time machines because they allow us to add value to our time by spending less of it traveling *to* our destination and more of it *at* our desired location. Just as we jump in a taxi today with very little notice, we will do the same with these air taxis, or air limos. And because the fuel efficiency of VLJs is equivalent to that of an SUV, they are an affordable choice for travel.

Of the 10,000 airports across the U.S., only 30 are used by the majority of commercial air transport flights. The purpose of point-to-point air travel is to avoid these 30 airports, and that is what VLJs provide. Finally, the FAA is supporting the innovation required for the successful VLJ market by ensuring safety and compliance



A new breed of very light jets like the Eclipse 400 (pictured) could make the use of private jets a real possibility for greater numbers of travelers.

with its regulations. Continued focus on the Next Generation aircraft control system and the ADS-B implementation will expand the power of VLJs.



**Dr. Daniel Petree**  
Dean, College of Business, Daytona Beach Campus

→ **Theoretically, VLJs** are a revolutionary way to travel. However, they are clearly in a stage of infancy in terms of potential growth, and it is still too early to determine how successful they will be. While it's true that VLJs favor a low capital investment and can save time for travelers, we have not seen enough data to determine how successful air taxis and on-demand air services will be. There are still major issues that must be resolved—including air traffic management

and safety requirements. VLJs have the potential to change both the amount of flying that's done and the means by which we fly, but it is still a question whether they are fiscally or financially viable.

Long term, I believe they will be less of a novelty and more of a realistic part of aviation phenomena, but the long term is fairly long. I know that futurists would like to see a jet parked in every garage, but we are a long way away from that.



**Michele Summers Halleran**  
Associate Professor, Aeronautical Science, Daytona Beach Campus  
FAA Industry Training Standards Research

→ **I definitely** believe VLJs have a niche in the market and will change the way we fly. They offer convenience with which commercial airlines cannot compete. A VLJ's ability to fly point-to-point is much more attractive to the person with a business agenda who has to maximize his or her time. They also can go to smaller airports closer to the passengers' destination, which is crucial at a time when fuel prices

are rising and commercial flights are becoming more limited. While I don't think VLJs will overtake the business jet market, I do believe they will expand the options for short-term travel. And because pilots receive the same type-rating training and must meet the same requirements, they are just as safe. VLJs must be evaluated and certified by the FAA, just like every other business jet and commercial aircraft.

**Do you think VLJs will change the way we fly?**

We'd love to hear your thoughts. Send your letters to:

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