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Air taxi startup says flights to SFO will cost the same as an Uber — in a fraction of the time

By Rachel Swan, Reporter

April 3, 2025







The Midnight aircraft, an electric air taxi made by Archer, is moved from inside a United Airlines hangar onto the tarmac at San Francisco International Airport on

Lea Suzuki/S.F. Chronicle


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A San Jose startup [has promised to fly commuters](#) over choked Bay Area [traffic](#), in an aircraft that made its runway debut Thursday morning.

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“Midnight,” by Archer Aviation, is a stylish four-seater electric plane, with twelve propellers distributed across its delicate wings. At 6,500 pounds, it weighs roughly as much as a Tesla SUV

and thrums “100 times quieter” than a helicopter at cruising altitudes, according to Archer.

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The idea seems tantalizing. Archer is building an air taxi network in San Francisco and Los Angeles that would allow people to swap [one-to-two-hour](#) drives for flights that take 20 minutes or less. If plans move forward, small battery-powered choppers will fill Bay Area skies in the next two years, whisking people between five landings, including a new 50-acre waterfront campus in South San Francisco.

But when Archer unveiled Midnight in the United Airlines hangar at San Francisco International Airport, some observers were wary. The aircraft conveyed all the ease, convenience, and VIP vibes of a private jet. Would it just be transportation for rich people?



United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby speaks during a United Airlines event for new electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft Midnight, an electric air taxi made by Archer, at San Francisco International Airport on Thursday.

Lea Suzuki/S.F. Chronicle

“Absolutely not,” Archer founder and CEO Adam Goldstein said.

“It’s designed to be a mass market product,” he explained. Once the air travel system gets underway, Goldstein predicts that a commuter flight within the Bay Area’s network — which spreads through Napa, South San Francisco, San Jose, Oakland and Livermore — would be roughly commensurate to booking a ride-hail vehicle.

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“Our goal is to be competitive with a taxi or a ride-hail,” said Nikhil Goel, chief commercial officer for Archer. Though he acknowledged that initially, air taxi fares might hover in the range of UberBlack — the luxury tier for ride-hail — Goel predicted they would quickly fall to a level that a mere mortal could afford.

So, Midnight may represent the future of Bay Area transit. Or it might just push the cost of private flights down the income ladder. Whatever the case, Archer hopes to fulfill a dream that dates back to “The Jetsons”: of zipping through the sky in an aeronautical SUV that needs minimal battery charging.

“Today, we waste so many of our hours stuck in a car,” Goel said. “We want to give people their time back. As we go deploy these, we’ll do it in a way that’s emissions free and really affordable. Over time our goal is to have thousands of these flying in the world’s major cities. And as part of that, a lot of people will get from points A to B more efficiently.”

Potentially, riders of electric aircraft could also avoid airport security lines by doing their screenings at the “terminal side” of the airport, Goel added.





Mayor Daniel Lurie leans in for a closer look at Midnight, the air taxi made by Archer.  
Lea Suzuki/S.F. Chronicle

Among the attendees to Thursday's event was Mayor Daniel Lurie. He watched the Midnight roll out for a promotional photo shoot while shaking hands with United Airlines executives who plan to increase flights at SFO.

"I'm really excited to see their potential," Lurie said of the new air taxi service, admiring Archer's commuter plane as he strolled up the tarmac.

Last summer, Archer attained a Federal Aviation Administration certificate to start operating commercial aircraft, enabling the company to conduct some 400 test flights.

Archer plans to launch in the United Arab Emirates this summer and is eyeing an expansion to U.S. regions, including the Bay Area, within the next two years.

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April 3, 2025



**Rachel Swan**

REPORTER



Rachel Swan is a breaking news and enterprise reporter. She joined the Chronicle in 2015 after stints at several alt weekly newspapers. Born in Berkeley, she graduated from Cal with a degree in rhetoric and is now raising two daughters in El Cerrito.

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