

## Very Light Jet Update for Commercial Pilots

The Very Light Jets are starting to arrive, somewhat behind many forecasts and expectations. A few have actually been delivered. To review - Very Light Jets are known as Microjets, personal jets, and recently personal light jets. The term VLJ has become politically correct for this new breed of jet and the traveling public is also being encouraged to embrace that designation.

NBAA defines Very Light Jets as: "Jet aircraft weighing 10,000 pounds or less maximum certificated takeoff weight and certificated for single pilot operations. These aircraft will possess at least some of the following features: (1) advanced cockpit automation, such as moving map GPS and multi-function displays; (2) automated engine and systems management; and (3) integrated autoflight, autopilot and flight-guidance systems." The definition is from the National Business Aircraft Association Training Guidelines for Single Pilot Operations of Very Light Jets and Technically Advanced Aircraft.

NASA and the aviation industry converged on this great VLJ idea for different reasons. This VLJ concept was inspired on the government side by their desire to improve air traffic flow around our major hub airports by utilizing the 5400 smaller "satellite" airports around the country. Many of these satellite airstrips fell into disuse with the advent of jet aircraft, which required longer runways to operate from. That is how we wound up with crowded major airports serving cold coffee and lost luggage.

Who is buying VLJs? Charter and Air-Taxi companies are getting the most attention. (Note that the air-taxi passenger pays for one way and the charter customer pays the round trip and seldom actually makes the return trip.) Progressively smaller corporations are definitely placing orders and the boss can now take middle management along on their VLJ to save time and make more money. Individuals make up a portion of sales and the pilot/owner is definitely at the table.

How big is this Very Light Jet phenomenon? The dozen-odd manufacturers are already reporting advance sales of nearly 3000 units with deliveries starting now. Forecasts range from 3000 VLJs flying in the next century to a "blackening of the skies with VLJs." The truth is probably in the middle.

How will these machines affect our world as commercial pilots? There is well deserved interest in this biz jet phenomenon called VLJs from all quarters: our low time brothers want to know if this is their ticket to the hours they need to fly big iron; retired and retiring pilots from 121 carriers want to know if this is a way they can keep their hand in the cockpit; part 91 and 135 experienced pilots are looking for their place in this new category of aircraft.

None of the jet makers are on exactly the same arrival procedure in their trek toward manufacture and delivery. Everyone in the game - manufacturers, FAA and insurers - seem to be paralyzed over the training standardization issue while the jets are selling at a fevered pitch! The situation is further complicated by the need for a subjective standardization of pilot experience so that training standards could be decided upon. In the past, the type rating was the deciding factor. You got one and you were good to go. Now there are VLJ pilot/owners with an array of flight experience to consider.

The term "mentor pilot" is being floated to describe what we all immediately recognize as IOE instructor. A comprehensive report regarding training requirements and mentor pilots written by William Welbourne of Allianz Agency can be found at [www.verylightjetmagazine.com/articles.php?art=2007\\_03a](http://www.verylightjetmagazine.com/articles.php?art=2007_03a). This report reflects the clear thinking of three manufacturers in regards to their training programs. It is very early in the delivery schedule of the VLJs and few of the training programs are solidified. The instructor pilot, or mentor, will definitely play a decisive role in the future of this new category of aircraft.

It is important to note that although the feds have the final say, the insurance industry has the sway in what is ultimately acceptable as to acceptability of a pilot to fly in a given plane. VLJs did not invent this phenomenon. It has been a reality of business and commercial aviation for centuries... if you can't get it insured you can't buy it or fly it.

If you have an opinion you want to lend, a rapidly expanding on-line discussion of VLJ training issues and concerns is being moderated by Bob Barnes, an aviation safety and training specialist from Scottsdale, Arizona. Participants include owner-pilots, air taxi operators, manufacturers, training providers, insurers, and regulators. You can participate by sending an e-mail to Bob at [RBarnesAZ@att.net](mailto:RBarnesAZ@att.net).

There are thirteen or more manufacturers in the Very Light Jet game right now, with a couple under the radar for now. Each one of these companies has to deal with the training devil. Each and every one of them will have to get something that the insurance industry accepts before they can get traction enough to support their visions with substantial sales numbers.

Contact the respective manufacturers as to their mentor pilot requirements. The situation is changing daily!

## VLJ AIR-TAXI OPERATOR PROGRESS REPORT

(courtesy of David Whitmore at [www.airtaxiworld.com](http://www.airtaxiworld.com))

With no VLJ yet in air taxi service, it comes down to the question, Which air taxi operators plan to use which VLJ? Here's an overview.

The first air taxi service anticipating VLJ operations is DayJet, which plans a mid-2007 start in Florida with the Eclipse 500, then expanding into the southeast and beyond.

Linear Air, already operating in the northeast with propeller aircraft, has the Eclipse 500 on order for its fleet.

ImagineAir in Georgia has also chosen the Eclipse 500 for its operations.

Point2Point Airways in North Dakota will be acquiring Diamond Aircraft's single engine D-jet.

Magnum Jet, preferring to call its service "air limousine," plans on the Adam Aircraft A700 and Embraer's Phenom 100 for its fleet to operate from Million Air's established FBO locations around the country.

That covers operators with published plans for specific VLJs. There are a few whose choices are not yet decided or revealed: POGO in the northeast, P!mo (not a typo error) in the DC/VA/MD area, and ProntoJet.

Cessna's Citation Mustang, first of the small jets with FAA Production Certification, is notably missing in this list, perhaps because it is said not to be targeting the air taxi market and considers this model to be an entry-level jet (not a VLJ).

### Breakdown of Operators by Type

Type I: Operators who own or control everything - the aircraft, pilots, reservations

- DayJet - Eclipse largest known customer

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- Linear Air (northeast) - has ordered Eclipses

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- Magnum Jet - plans to use Adam A700s and Embraer Phenom 100s

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- POGO (northeast) - is still in decision mode about which VLJ to use

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- Point2Point Airways (north central) - has signed a deal with Diamond to acquire D-Jet when available

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- Way To Go (west) - plans to use Eclipses
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- YourJet - undecided on choice of VLJ
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Type II: Brokers, network operations, or aggregators who contract with various aircraft owners, and have reservation systems to marry them to flying passengers

- OneSky (USA+) - plans to integrate VLJs into their operations
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- OpenTaxi Systems (USA) - system under development (formerly Penguin Airlines)
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- TaxiJet (USA+) - just opened; plan to integrate VLJs into their operations

## SINGLE-ENGINE VERY LIGHT JETS

### Diamond D-JET

Diamond Aircraft Industries - London, Ontario, Canada

Price: \$1.38M US (with notable options of built-in Parachute and Radar)

Speed: 315 kias

NBAA IFR Range: 1350

Deliveries: 2008

[diamondair.com/mainpage.php](http://diamondair.com/mainpage.php)

### PiperJet

Piper Aircraft Corp - Vero Beach, Florida, USA

Price: \$2.2M

Speed: 360 kias

NBAA IFR Range: 1300

Deliveries: 2010

Sport Utility Jet

[www.newpiper.com](http://www.newpiper.com)

Others VLJs in the single-engine group include Cirrus Design Cirrus Jet, Excel-Jet Sport-Jet and Maverick SoloJet.

## TWIN-ENGINE VERY LIGHT JETS

### Adam A700

Adam Aircraft Industries - Englewood, Colorado, USA

Price: \$2.0M

Speed: 340 kias

NBAA IFR Range: 1100

Deliveries: FQ 2007

[www.adamaircraft.com](http://www.adamaircraft.com)

Cessna Mustang  
Cessna Aircraft Company -Wichita, Kansas, USA  
Price: \$2.7M  
Speed: 340 kias  
NBAA IFR Range: 1150  
Deliveries: Now  
[www.cessna.com](http://www.cessna.com)

Eclipse 500  
Eclipse Aviation - Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA  
Price: \$1.5M  
Speed: 370 kias  
NBAA IFR Range: 1125  
Deliveries: Now  
[www.eclipseaviation.com](http://www.eclipseaviation.com)

HondaJet  
Honda Aircraft Co. - Greensboro, North Carolina, USA  
Price: \$3.65M  
Speed: 405 kias  
NBAA IFR Range: 1100  
Deliveries: 2010  
[world.honda.com/jet](http://world.honda.com/jet)

Javelin MK-10  
Aviation Technology Group - Englewood, Colorado, USA  
Price: \$2.795  
Speed: 500 kias  
NBAA IFR Range: 1000  
Deliveries: 2009  
[www.avtechgroup.com](http://www.avtechgroup.com)

Phenom 100  
Embraer Executive Jets - Sao José dos Campos, Brazil  
Price: \$2.85M  
Speed: 380 kias  
NBAA IFR Range: 1160 NAM  
Deliveries: Mid-2008  
[www.embraer.com](http://www.embraer.com)

Other VLJs in the twin-engine group include Epic Elite, Spectrum Aeronautical Spectrum 33 and Eviation EV-20 Vantage Jet.

It is the intention of this article to provide an overview of the Very Light Jets - who's in the game and how the phenomenon can help us as pilots. Stand by for more information as it develops.

Bill Strait flies international on the MD-11 for a major freight company and is also rated in G-1, DC-9, B727, B-75/76 and seaplanes. He is the founding editor of Very Light Jet Magazine.