



**Publication Alert February 2007 –
Very light jets (VLJ) will have a ground-breaking effect on the air
transport industry**

VLJ's will soon be available in quantity and will offer budget-minded business travelers a new substitute for traditional airline and executive jet service. This aircraft will have five to six passenger seats, weighs less than 10,000 pounds, and is able to operate safely from airports with runways as short as 3,000 feet. The use of this aircraft can be an economical way to save time by avoiding the congestion associated with large airports and will open up new customer markets. According to a questionnaire done by the authors, the results indicated that the VLJ is a strong candidate for many organizations.

Point-to-point traffic

Travelers are becoming more aware of the utility and economy of airport-to-airport direct travel. Affordable VLJ's will provide a big boost to this market. These jets can serve smaller cities and offer less hijack threat and less security hassle. It seems very appropriate for business travelers. But, a few things need to be done. How can pilots be best trained? Acceptance needs to be gained by the professional flying community and FAA, and the problem of insurability of owner-pilots needs to be overcome.

Guidelines and level of training should be based on experience and similar guidelines for dual or mentor instructions are evident for leading manufacturers. Secondly, there are many misconceptions about the availability of insurance for owner-flown VLJ's. Some companies have already announced VLJ coverage based on proficiency and specific training requirements. Government support for this aircraft is also critical to success. Certification for single-pilot operations is an important step in that process.

VLJ well-suited for organization's air service needs

The majority of the organizations that answered to the questionnaire indicated that they use multiple flights per week or per day and a vast majority operates their own passenger aircraft. Types of personnel that use passenger air services are primarily upper management or a mixture of different personnel. Six or fewer of the personnel of each organization fly on the same flight. With a normal seating capacity of five or six and with manufacturers targeting air-taxi operators and owner-pilots, VLJ's appear to be well suited to address these organizations' air service needs. More than half of the respondents indicated that perhaps or absolutely would increase their use of air services when VLJ's are introduced. So, the potential market seems quite strong. Of the respondents' organizations, services represent the largest respondent group, followed by manufacturing and transportation. Most organizations had less than 10 different personnel using air services and however, almost a quarter said that over 100 different personnel used air services annually.

VLJ use was considered important for short trips up to 500 miles and longer trips over 500 miles. Operation with a single pilot was not considered to be a problem. Most believe that VLJ would open up new markets, but were concerned about the availability of ground transportation, fuel, and food services at smaller airports.

Conclusion

To sum up, the VLJ has arrived and will soon open up new markets. Especially the business travel market seems appropriate for this model. VLJ's are projected to be point-to-point traffic and will use smaller airports to avoid traffic congestion at large airports. A majority of the respondents seemed to prefer jets and already operate their own aircraft. The fact that almost 90% of the respondents' business trips involve six or fewer people makes the VLJ a strong candidate for these organizations.

Source:

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