



BOOM IS SERIOUS ABOUT BUILDING THE SUPERSONIC PASSENGER JET OF THE FUTURE

News / Manufacturer



Already made up of a number of heavy-hitters in the aerospace industry, Boom just signed a deal with Virgin to make affordable supersonic travel a reality.

It's been twelve-and-a-half years since the Concorde retired, and we haven't seen a viable supersonic passenger jet since, though not for want of trying. Many outlandish concepts have been proposed, and some feasible designs supported by major aerospace companies like Airbus are also in the works.

And now there's this. Boom, a small operation out of Colorado, might be able to succeed where others have failed. The company hopes to build a prototype plane that can fly at Mach 2.2 (1,688 mph) by the end of 2017. Boom plans to use existing engines and composite materials to build its aircraft.



Concept image of a Boom aircraft at Heathrow International Airport.

Ultimately, Boom wants to build commercial aircraft with room for 40 passengers and offer transatlantic roundtrips for roughly \$5,000, about the price of ordinary business class. Boom's plane would fly at 60,000 feet to take advantage of the thin atmosphere, a height that would allow passengers to see the curvature of the Earth. If Boom can pull it off, a flight from New York to London on one of their planes would take only 3.5 hours.

These are promises we've heard before from a number of different supersonic-passenger-jet-manufacturing hopefuls, but Boom has a few things going for it that most other companies don't. For one, the 11 people working for Boom out of Centennial Airport just south of Denver are some real heavy-hitters. Chief engineer and co-founder Joe Wilding has designed passenger planes for three different aerospace companies. Andy Berryann, chief of propulsion, was an engineer at Pratt & Whitney who helped build the engines for the F-22 Raptor and F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. Principal Aerodynamics Engineer Kenrick Waithe worked for NASA and Gulfstream Aerospace on the Quiet Boom project to study the suppression of sonic booms. The rest of the team includes aerospace engineers and propulsion experts from Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and Northrop Grumman subsidiary, Scaled Composites. These guys are serious.

The other thing that Boom has is a partner with significant resources and deep pockets: Sir Richard Branson. It was announced today that Virgin Group has signed an option to buy 10 planes from Boom for roughly \$2 billion if everything goes according to plan. Virgin Galactic's spacecraft manufacturer The Spaceship Company will also be assisting with the design and development of the prototype plane.

"We can confirm that The Spaceship Company will provide engineering, design and manufacturing services, flight tests and operations and that we have an option on the first 10 airframes," a spokeswoman for Virgin Group told *The Guardian*. "It is still early days and just the start of what you'll hear about our shared ambitions and efforts."

Boom also says that it has signed an option for an addition \$2 billion worth of planes with an as-yet-unannounced British carrier. Bloomberg reports that Boom has already raised \$2.1 million, which should be enough to develop a prototype. It is unclear if Virgin Group will be supplying capital to

the venture in addition to the assistance with development and flight testing.

"This isn't science fiction," Boom founder and CEO Blake Scholl told The Guardian. "If I was telling you it was going to go Mach 4—but, I'm not. We're not using any technology that doesn't already exist, it is just putting it together in the right way... This is supersonic passenger air travel, no bullshit, and it's actually affordable."

24 MARCH 2016

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