



INTRODUCING 'MAXWELL': NASA REVEALS EXPERIMENTAL ELECTRIC X-PLANE

News / Manufacturer



NASA has unveiled plans for its experimental electric plane, designated the X-57 and nicknamed "Maxwell," in the agency's first addition to the groundbreaking 'X series' in a decade.

'Maxwell' was introduced Friday at the Aviation 2016 conference in Washington by NASA Administrator Charles Bolden during his keynote address.

The hybrid electric research plane will have 14 electric motors to turn the propellers located on the long narrow wings.

All 14 motors will be used for takeoff and landing, but only the two larger motors on the tip of each wing will be needed during flight.

NASA hopes this will prove that distributing electric power across a number of motors results in a five-fold reduction in the energy needed for a private plane to cruise at 175 mph.

Maxwell won't be appearing on the horizon any time soon, though. The X-57 electric propulsion technology will be tested over four years. The space agency hopes it will demonstrate the benefits of using this technology over fuel, and pave the way for a "new era" of aviation development at NASA.

The agency's ambitious 10-year New Aviation Horizons program also includes plans for five larger transport-scale X-planes which will use advanced technologies, like the X-57, to reduce fuel use, emissions and noise.



NASA claims projections “predict the tech could save the airline industry \$255 billion accrued during the first 25 years after being put into service.”

The battery powered X-57 was named after James Clerk Maxwell, the 19th century Scottish physicist who made a groundbreaking contribution to the field of electromagnetism.

It follows in the footsteps of an impressive collection of planes from the X series which began with Bell X1 in 1947 - the first aircraft to break the sound barrier in level flight. The X-plane program was re-launched in NASA's 2016 federal budget.

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